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## **Book Review: 'Their Brothers Keepers' by Philip Friedman**

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Philip Friedman: **THEIR BROTHERS' KEEPERS** \*

IN THE first volume of *The Bridge*, a survey appeared under the grim title "Ledger of Death." It was a statistical report, drily factual but horrifying, on the Jewish population of Europe before and after the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews. It is consoling, two years later, to be able to write a report that might be called "Ledger of Life." The over-all statistics presented in Philip Friedman's book are as appalling as those Father Keller assembled in his "Ledger of Death," but they are leavened by additional information and by an inspiring new emphasis. To quote from the author's introduction:

The vast area of Europe seized and held by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II contained approximately 8,300,000 Jews. It is estimated that 6,000,000 perished by Nazi lethal devices, disease, or starvation. Considering that Hitler mobilized all of Germany's resources for the avowed purpose of annihilating the Jews, and that in this work he found helpers and collaborators among the native population in almost all Nazi-occupied countries, it is indeed a miracle that more than 2,000,000 remained alive. Those surviving were saved by flight, emigration, or evacuation before the arrival of the Germans and the changeable fortunes of war. But at least a million Jews survived in the very crucible of the Nazi hell, the occupied areas.

How this million survived is the theme of our story. . . . The miracle could not have been accomplished without the active assistance of the Christian population.

We will never know how many of the approximately 300,000,000 Europeans who lived briefly under the Nazi heel helped Jews. It is not the number that matters. What matters is that a small army of valorous men and women opened their hearts and their homes to a people marked for extinction, defying the invader and death itself (p. 13).

Doctor Friedman is exceptionally well qualified to write this important story. Not only is he a trained historian who has lectured on Jewish history at learned institutions here and abroad, but he per-

sonally experienced both the hate and the love that his book reveals. In his book, he takes up the story nation by nation, giving statistics on the Jewish population in each place and describing some of the means used to thwart Hitler's diabolical plans to "solve" the "Jewish problem."

Of the countries invaded by the Nazis, Finland and Denmark emerged from the ordeal with the finest records. Dr. Felix Kersten, Heinrich Himmler's physician (who used his position to wage a courageous one-man campaign to rescue Jews right from under the nose of Hitler's chief hangman, and whose story is one of the most fascinating in this book), noted in his diary what Finnish Foreign Minister Witting had told him in regard to Himmler's demands that he round up the country's Jews: "Finland is a decent nation. We would rather perish together with the Jews. . . . We will not surrender the Jews!" (p. 146). He spoke truly for his little David of a country; it set an amazing record for fearless non-co-operation with the Goliath of tyranny. Out of Finland's 2,000 Jews, only four were deported!

Denmark was almost as successful in thwarting the anti-Semites. Under the dynamic and courageous leadership of its king, who proved himself Christian in more than his name, this country managed to save all but fifty-two of its 6,500 Jews. The entire nation, from the royal family down to the humblest citizen, seems to have been active in the underground movement, and the rescue work undertaken, both openly and secretly, excelled in generosity and ingenuity. Doctor Friedman says: "The story of the survival of Danish Jewry is the story of Denmark's Christian freemen, who defied all the might of Germany to carry out one of the most miraculous sea rescues in history" (pp. 152-153).

Through its regular diplomatic channels, the Danish government openly continued to provide for the Jews it had rescued long after they were safely out of the country, sending them money and packages of food and clothing, taking care of their possessions at home, and welcoming them back after the war with celebrations and thoughtful touches of kindness that went far beyond what one expects of officialdom:

Money to carry on the vast rescue operations was always forthcoming. . . . Pastor Paul Boxenius, nicknamed by the Nazis "The Shooting Priest"

\* New York: Crown Publishers, 1957.



because his activities in the Underground included, in addition to rescuing Jews, the blowing up of German communication lines, declared after the war: "When you needed money you simply went to a bank and asked the teller for 5,000 or 10,000 kroner, stating your purpose, and the money was promptly handed to you." The recipient, according to the pastor, was not required to identify himself or present any authorization for the request. Significantly enough, there were no records of any misrepresentation. . . . (Even children were busy collecting funds.) . . .

Records were meticulously kept of all books, libraries, archives, and other assets belonging to Jewish individuals and organizations, so that they could be returned to their rightful owners after the war. . . .

After the war, when the Danish-Jewish refugees returned to their country, each one of them was granted 4,050 kroner. The Jewish homes that had not been burned or looted by the Nazis were returned to their rightful owners. Some repatriates even found that their lawns had been mowed (pp. 156-158).

Some of the "neutral" countries also distinguished themselves. They were far from "neutral" when it came to human rights. Sweden was outstanding both in its co-operation with Danish and Norwegian rescue work and in its own organizing of international aid. The appointment of Raoul Wallenberg as attaché of the Swedish Embassy in Budapest marked the beginning of one of the most magnificent—and strange—episodes of the Hitler era. With the financial aid of the United States Ambassador to Sweden, and the active co-operation of the papal nunciature, the Swiss, Portuguese, and Spanish embassies, and the International Red Cross, Wallenberg managed, in just six months, to organize the rescue of several thousand Hungarian Jews. The exact number he rescued will probably never be known, any more than will be, apparently, his own fate. He mysteriously disappeared a few days after the Russians "liberated" Hungary from the Nazis, even while elaborate preparations were being made to celebrate his valorous deeds against the Nazis. From January 1944 until February 1957, no one was able to get any information on his whereabouts; then, suddenly, "a news dispatch from the U.S.S.R. revealed that Wallenberg had died, allegedly from a heart attack, in the dreaded Lubyanka Prison in Moscow on July 17, 1947" (p. 167). In other words, according to the Russians, Wallenberg died three and a half years after his still unexplained disappearance, during an

equally unexplained jail sentence, announced cryptically after an equally unexplained delay of ten years! This puzzling episode is one of the most frightening in Doctor Friedman's entire book, because it shows the continuity of terror, the kinship between the Nazis and their supposed enemies, the Communists. Evidently, men who hate God act alike, no matter how much they may superficially differ—evidence that man is indeed made in His image, and that it is therefore impossible to fight God and still befriend man.

Although the other occupied countries had fewer survivors than Finland and Denmark, it would be unfair to imply that none of them did its utmost to rescue Nazi victims. Different problems in different places produced different results, but this book proves that rescue work was often widespread and ambitious to the point of heroism, even though it was not invariably successful. Success was not always possible, and this is no reflection on those who tried and failed; God judges us by what we attempt, not by what we accomplish. In Vidukle, Lithuania, there was a case in point: A priest, trying to rescue thirty children whose parents had just been rounded up and shot, hid them in his church. When some German officers, brought there by an informer, arrived, he blocked their path and shouted: "If you kill the children, you'll have to kill me first!" They did exactly that, and killed the children over his dead body (p. 140).

A pro-Nazi French journalist complained: "Every Catholic family shelters a Jew" (p. 51). Actually, many French Jews perished. After the war, when Father Alexander Glasberg was interviewed on what he had done for the Jews, he said sadly: "I am not a hero . . . I accomplished no heroic deeds. . . . The two thousand Jews I helped rescue . . . this was a drop in the ocean. Six million Jews were killed" (p. 53).

The temptation to despair at the bigness of the ocean of evil and the smallness of the drops of goodness was great, and many people succumbed to it. In fact, it seemed at the time as if nearly everyone did. If one heard about the resistance undertaken by a few, one did not feel particularly cheered; one simply wondered why there were so few. It did not seem natural that so many ordinary people should look on passively when other people were suffering unjustly; protest and resistance, one felt, should be the rule, not the exception. But



now that the full record of this era is becoming visible, one no longer wonders why there were so few, but how on earth there could have been so many!

The lengths to which good people had to go, and were willing to go, to fight what seemed at the time overwhelmingly victorious evil, are astounding. There was, for instance, Edoardo Focherini, editor of the Bologna Catholic daily *Avvenire d'Italia*, father of seven children. If anyone had a reason—seven good reasons—to say he could not afford to protest the injustices around him, surely he did. He protested, nevertheless, at the price of having all seven of his children murdered by the Nazis! Many of us are, or at least hope to be, capable of great personal risks on behalf of a righteous cause, but there are surely not many parents who would dare to equal Abraham's sacrifice by offering up their beloved children. Such sacrifice is not ordinary or natural; it is extraordinary and supernatural. Yet this is what one "ordinary" decent person after another had to do in order to see ordinary decency prevail, and the astonishing and marvelous thing is that so many took such risks, repeatedly.

Men inspired by hatred are willing to betray their fellow men for incredibly small gain; apparently, vice is its own reward:

The rewards for denouncing a Jew were subject to variations, at different places and times. Thus, e.g., the original price in the Netherlands was 50 to 75 florin but later, in some places, dropped to only 7½ gulden (about 2 U.S. dollars); in France, 100 to 500 francs; in the Gouvernement General of Poland, a bottle of vodka, five pounds of sugar and two cartons of cigarettes; in Vilna and its environs about 120 pounds of sugar; in Eastern Galicia a quart of brandy, two pounds of sugar and 300 zloty, and so on (p. 184).

If little in the way of silver was needed to tempt some into betraying their fellows, the threats used by the Nazis against non-betrayers were more than large enough to intimidate many:

The death penalty for hiding or helping a Jew took effect in 1942. . . . People found guilty of sheltering or helping a Jew were usually executed on the spot without a trial, beaten to death in jail, or hanged publicly. . . . [There were] many instances where people were executed for sheltering a Jew or even for selling bread to a Jew (a baker, his wife and son shot). . . . Sometimes even a simple manifestation of

sympathy to the persecuted could cost the person involved his life. Thus in Mława [Poland] the Gestapo staged a cruel public execution of fifty Jews in April 1942. The Nazis forced the entire population to witness this spectacle for the sake of "racial education." One of the Poles who could no longer control himself started to shout: "Down with Hitler! Innocent blood is being shed." He was instantly caught and killed by the Germans (pp. 184-185, 206-207).

In addition to the fact that rescuing Jews was tremendously dangerous, it was also tremendously difficult:

Hiding a Jew was not an easy matter. It required more than willingness, courage, and readiness to imperil the lives of one's family; a proper place was necessary, an ability to camouflage the hide-out, contact with like-minded individuals who would risk taking the Jew in the event of an imminent raid. Experience had taught the host as well as the one in hiding that movement of and frequent changes in hiding places were essential for survival. Thus, the saving of one Jew or a whole family often involved the co-operation of many Christians. Frequently a Jewish family was divided among several hosts. Hiding a large family or a group of Jews in a private home, particularly in urban areas, almost inevitably ended in disaster. Sizable groups found shelter in monasteries, convents, mountain hide-outs, or bunkers in the woods. . . . A great deal of ingenuity was required when a "guest" became ill or died, or when a pregnant woman was about to give birth. The presence of small children increased the danger of being found out. Sleeping pills were used liberally to keep children from crying excessively.

The building and arrangement of hiding places became an art. People built double walls and hanging ceilings behind which Jews sometimes lived for years. Attics and cellars were camouflaged. Used also were annexes in old office buildings, as was done in the case of the Franks in Amsterdam. Jews were hidden in pigsties, cowsheds, stables, haystacks, or cemetery graves. . . .

Hiding places were often so cramped that the Jews inside took turns lying down. Some places were so crowded those in hiding were forced to stand immobile for hours, and were permitted to exercise their limbs only in the dark of night when their host let them out for a brief period. A Jewish woman hiding in Warsaw lived for eighteen months in a standing position. After the Nazis were driven out, she required hospitalization to cure her legs. . . .

Jewish children were hidden by their mothers or by Gentiles in baking stoves, garbage bins, and boxes. In Warsaw this writer saw a child who



had been kept in a box concealed in a dark cabin. The child was almost totally blind; the muscles of his limbs were atrophied, and he could not walk. His speech was a series of inarticulate sounds. This six-year-old Jewish boy, reared in a world of darkness, was not undernourished; his foster mother had simply taken all necessary precautions for their mutual safety (pp. 15-17).

Despite the lack of exclamation marks in this extraordinary description, one can see that rescue work often required heroism on the part of the saved as well as of the saviors!

Details such as these are not merely fascinating to the curious reader, they also teach a great deal about human ingenuity, courage, and stamina. It is disappointing, therefore, that in many parts of the book, the details are scant. In the discussion of Belgium, for example, one reads this sentence: "Belgians from all walks of life joined in the great crusade, among them Dowager Queen Elizabeth, who rescued several hundred Jews" (p. 68). How? When? Where? Not a word is said. But surely the rescue of several hundred merits considerable attention, especially when the rescuer was a queen.

Space undoubtedly was a vital consideration, for the author says in his "Notes and References" that he was able to use "only an infinitesimal portion" of the material available to him (p. 181). Nonetheless, the principle of selection might have been explained, and a more consistent policy followed in the choice of examples. The book abounds in accounts of exciting and moving adventures, yet, strangely enough, it is often dull. One keeps wondering, rather guiltily, why one is not more stirred. Frequently the accounts are so brief as to be outlines rather than stories, and the people in them seem fleshless, mere skeletons. Inconsistencies of length and detail can of course be partly explained by the varying amounts of information available, but only partly. Too often whole paragraphs are sheer strings of numbers—numbers threatened, numbers arrested, numbers escaped, numbers dead—and we tend to become numbed by numbers: The distinction between 10,000 and 11,000 prisoners blurs; and the people referred to in the lists of statistics become mere digits.

The best parts of the book are those in which geographical statistics are absent and narrative is employed, with anecdotes and portraits of individual personalities unified by a particular theme: the chapters on "The Heart of Woman," on the spy work of Felix Kersten, on the

mysterious case of Raoul Wallenberg, on the so-called "Battle of the Badge," and the introductory summaries of rewards, punishments, and techniques of hiding. In these sections, history and biography come alive; one encounters people who convince us never to despair of mankind. If it were not for such people, one might feel that it was understandable to yield to Hitler or to a later imitator of him, out of fear, hopelessness, or helplessness. But armed with the knowledge that individuals such as these have lived, one is no longer reluctant or ashamed to be alive, no longer fearful that evil may triumph over good.

It is heartening to see evidence that, after two thousand years of history, the words "Christian" and "martyr" still belong together, and that the words "persecutor" and "Christian" are still in fundamental conflict. During the years of Hitler's power, the scope and intensity of his terror were so overwhelming that it seemed as if there were no Christians left in Europe. This last sentence might puzzle a Jew to whom the word "Christian" merely means someone who is not Jewish, and who therefore thinks of Nazi Europe as a place where there was no one left *but* Christians! "Christian" and "non-Jew," however, are not synonymous. A Christian is someone who believes in the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ and who is therefore bound to obey His teachings. Christ warned that not everyone who would call Him "Lord" would enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who did the will of His Father (see Mt 7:21-22). He told His followers that whatever they did to the least of His brothers, He would count as done to Him (see Mt 25:40). Hence every time one sees a so-called Christian persecuting anyone (whether a Jew in Europe yesterday, or a Negro in America today), one sees a perverted Christian—a betrayer of Christ, persecuting *Him*.

One feature of Doctor Friedman's book is, therefore, inaccurate and confusing: He uses the words "Christian," "non-Jew," and "Gentile" interchangeably, and when he speaks of "the oppressed" under the Nazis, he means "the Jews." The oppressed under Hitler were not Jews alone, but also Christians, political independents, liberals, Socialists, Communists, internationalists, humanitarians, and all the "unfit": the aged, the crippled, the chronically or mentally ill, the retarded. There was, it is true, a special viciousness to the Nazi campaign against the Jews. Here a concerted attempt was made to wipe



out an entire people, not for any crime the people had committed but simply because they existed. Non-Jews persecuted by Hitler were not in this inescapable position; when they were arrested and/or executed, it was usually because their ideas and actions, not their very selves, were inimical to Nazism. Non-Jews could save themselves by changing their convictions, whereas it did not matter what convictions a Jew might have held. Nevertheless, to many an honest man and woman fundamental beliefs were not to be denied, even though the price might be death. As to Hitler's Christian victims, books like *Christ in Dachau* (Westminster: Newman Press) and *Dying We Live* (New York: Pantheon) have shown, with documented detail, the intensity with which he persecuted them for no other reason than loyalty to their faith.

Hence the description of *Their Brothers' Keepers* on the book jacket is misleading. This is not the story of "the Christian heroes and heroines who helped the oppressed escape the Nazi terror," but the story of *some* of the heroes and heroines who helped *some* of the oppressed. I do not want to quibble about this point, but the book's omission of certain outstanding Christian rescue activities would be less disappointing than it is if the book did not purport to be so complete, and the inclusion of certain other accounts would be more appropriate if the book had been given a different subtitle. Among the "Christian" rescuers whose courage is celebrated are some Communists, who would certainly not be flattered to be called Christians, as well as many Socialists and other anti-Nazis whose heroism on behalf of the oppressed Jews was based on political or on humanitarian, rather than on religious, motives. That some good pagans did heroic rescue work is good to know; even in the darkest hours there is natural goodness alive and active in the world as well as sincere faith—but it is useful to know which is which.

Certain prejudices against the Church (or perhaps they are merely misunderstandings of which the author is not even aware) appear occasionally in Doctor Friedman's book. Here is an example:

As in other Western countries under the Nazi heel, church dignitaries [in Italy] limited their interventions to protests and ideological declarations, while the rescue work was being carried on by the lower clergy. Jews were hidden in monasteries, convents, and ecclesiastical buildings such as the Don Orione Homes. Many Catholic priests were arrested and

some lost their lives. Among the saviors were a few who admitted that missionary zeal was an incentive in their work. *But* [italics mine] most of them were truly doing God's work, holding out a hand to those who were threatened with annihilation. To the humble Italian—priest, monk, farmer, or laborer in the city—belongs the glory that came with saving the lives of innocents. They rescued 40,000 Jews from Hitler's death wagons; 15,000 they were unable to save (p. 74).

This paragraph contains three errors: first, the implication that in other countries "church dignitaries limited their interventions" to words rather than deeds; second, the statement that this was also true in Italy; third, the indication that "missionary zeal" is not "God's work."

To take up the last point first: If Christians believe, as they do, that their faith is a source of unfailing strength in tribulation and a particular encouragement in time of persecution, and that it is a "safe-conduct" to eternal peace, how can they then not long to share it with others? They would be misers if they did not. True, should conversion ever have been the price demanded for rescue, should a man fallen among robbers ever have been looked on, not as a person in need, but as an object to be preached to, then Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan, of the true neighbor, would have been emptied of meaning. There is nothing sinister about "missionary zeal," however. The desire to convert a non-Christian does not imply the desire to force him to do anything against his will or conscience. On the contrary, unless faith is sincere, it is hypocrisy, against which Christ hurled the most stinging condemnations. But surely the eagerness to help someone who is persecuted and frightened and near despair by helping him discover a deep, unshakable peace and joy is a spiritual rescue work no less laudable than the physical rescue work that Doctor Friedman admires and praises. The sincerity with which one type of work is pursued may, in fact, often depend on the sincerity with which the other is undertaken. The spiritual motive may be the stimulus of the physical rescue and supply the courage and grace needed to carry it through; similarly, the physical rescue work may well be the test of the genuineness of the spiritual concern, since, as St. James says, Christians must be doers of the word (see 1:22).

As for the accusation that in western countries "church dignitaries limited their interventions to protests," while the dangerous deeds



were carried on by "the lower clergy," Doctor Friedman gives evidence contradicting his own assertion by mentioning a number of German, Italian, Belgian, and French bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and papal nuncios who did much more than merely talk. Of France, for example, he says: "The Church did not content itself with exhortations to the faithful; it solemnly urged them to act. Archbishop Gerlier himself sponsored and supported the activities of the anti-Nazi Christian Friendship (*L'Amitié Chrétienne*) which, under the brilliant leadership of the Jesuit Father Pierre Chaillet, fought anti-Semitism and rescued many Jews" (p. 52).

Doctor Friedman also mentions the sermons and activities of three German cardinals: Michael Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, the Bishop of Münster (later Cardinal) Clemens August von Galen, and Conrad Cardinal Count von Preysing of Berlin. But he gives few details about them. He calls the Bishop of Münster "a lone strong voice in a land where silent obedience had become the accepted way of life," although one paragraph later he records:

The Catholic church as a body protested against racial persecution in 1943, when the German bishops were called upon to declare: "The extermination of human beings *per se* is to be deplored even if it is allegedly in the interest of the commonwealth; it is particularly evil when directed against the innocent and defenseless, the mental cases, the sick, hostages, POW's, people of alien races or alien descent" (p. 94).

The function of bishops is to teach and thus urge the faithful to act. Hence when a bishop utters words of protest, his words *are* action. Unfortunately, Doctor Friedman does not mention the fact that there were ten thousand Christian clergymen in German concentration camps, of whom eight thousand were Catholic priests; this would be additional evidence of many more than one lone strong voice in the land of "silent obedience."

In occupied western Europe we need only look at Holland to see how the bishops sustained anti-Nazi activity over many years.

In May, 1940, Holland was occupied . . . but long before May, 1940, the Catholic Bishops had insisted on Holland's spurning the pro-Nazi doctrines. They forbade Dutch Catholics to have any commerce with pro-Nazi countrymen. They had even threatened denial of the sacraments and Christian burial to Catholics who in any way subscribed to "this spirit hos-

tile to Christianity." And the Catholic clergy backed their Bishops to the hilt. (J. J. Galvin, "Priest of the Underground," *Catholic Digest*, May 1946, p. 48.)

In August 1941, the Dutch hierarchy came into open conflict with the German authorities over a decree that Jewish children were to be taught only by Jewish teachers; the bishops protested against this injustice and declared they would never permit children to be sent away from school because of their origin.

Soon afterwards a proclamation was issued that bills should be posted on all public buildings: *Voor Joden verboden*. The Bishops refused to allow this either. Yet the exclusion of Jews from public life was of little significance compared to the mass-deportations of men, women and children, indeed of whole Jewish families, which began in 1942. . . .

On the 11th July 1942 the representatives of all religious denominations sent a telegram to the Reichskommissar expressing their indignation at these measures. (Teresia de Spiritu Sancto, O.D.C., *Edith Stein*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952, pp. 201-202.)

When private protests did not produce any but minor concessions, the Archbishop of Utrecht issued a magnificent pastoral letter, every ringing word of which ought to be quoted. It was read in all Catholic churches in Holland on Sunday, July 26, 1942, and aroused great excitement all over Holland.

On the 2nd of August all non-Aryan members of every Dutch religious community were arrested and carried off. . . . General-Kommissar Schmidt announced . . . that this was a reprisal against the pastoral letter. . . . [He said] "Since the Catholic hierarchy . . . refuses to enter into negotiations, then we, for our part, are compelled to regard the Catholic Jews as our worst enemies and consequently see to their deportation to the East with all possible speed." (*Ibid.*, pp. 206-209.)

This was speedily done: "They were thrown into vans and assembled at Amersfoort before being carried off to the gas-chambers and crematoria" (*ibid.*, p. 229). It was in this mass deportation of Catholic Jews that Edith Stein, the famous German Jewish philosopher who had become a Carmelite nun and who had offered her life to God as a sacrifice on behalf of her people, met her death.

None of this information about the Catholic Church in Holland is given in Doctor Friedman's book. No deportations prior to those of



the fall of 1942 are mentioned, and one gets the impression that among the Dutch only Protestants and Socialists were anti-Nazi. In another part of the book, however, there is an indirect tribute to Dutch and other bishops, by a Mr. Frederic, a German Foreign Office agent. After a tour through several Nazi-occupied countries he gave a confidential report to his superiors in September 1943. In it he mentioned the protests against the killing of Jews made by the Metropolitan Andreas Sheptytsky, Archbishop of Lwow, titular head of the Ukrainian (Uniate Catholic) Church. This seventy-seven-year-old prelate was an active fighter against the Nazis; he hid many Jews in his palace and in the churches, convents, and monasteries under his jurisdiction. (A petition for his beatification has recently been approved by the Holy See.) The Nazi agent complained: "In this issue the Metropolitan made the same statements and even used the same phrasing as the French, Belgian and Dutch bishops, as if all of them were receiving the same instructions from the Vatican" (p. 212).

The role of the Vatican itself is only hinted at in Doctor Friedman's book. In two or three places it is said that a particular work of rescue was "aided by the Vatican," but no details are given. Pope Pius XI is not even mentioned; his anti-Nazi encyclical, "Mit brennender Sorge," issued to the German Church in 1937, should not be forgotten. It "was secretly distributed all over Germany and read from the pulpits at risk of imprisonment" (*Christ in Dachau*, p. 5). This encyclical was no isolated protest, but part of a consistent, long-range Vatican policy:

The tradition of the Church is to treat with established régimes, with a view to securing acceptable conditions for the practice of their religion by the faithful and of its ministry by the priesthood. Rome entered into a concordat with the Third Reich in July 1933. Her battle, already begun, against Nazi racial doctrines was to become more bitter almost at once, reaching its climax in 1937-38. Unfortunately, this story is all too little known, though it is plainly revealed in reviews and publications of the time. All that can be done in the present study is to recall a few specially significant episodes, not so much of the daily battle waged *on the spot* by thousands of courageous laymen and priests . . . as of that carried on, likewise on the spot, by the hierarchy and from Rome by the Papacy itself under the dauntless Christian leadership of Pius XI. (Yves M. J. Congar, O.P., *The Catholic Church and the Race Question*, Paris: UNESCO, 1953, pp. 50-51.)

Father Congar, in the report just quoted, continues with three pages listing other official Church documents, issued from 1928 through 1939: bishops' pastoral letters and sermons condemning the errors of racism, books by Nazis placed on the Index of Forbidden Books, addresses and encyclicals by the Pope and various cardinals condemning exaggerated nationalism and racism and, specifically, anti-Semitism.

Pope Pius XII comes off slightly better than his predecessor in Doctor Friedman's book, although even he is mentioned only twice—once in connection with the rescue of French Jews, and once in connection with Hungarian rescue work. There is no indication of the vast extent or the intensity of his labors on behalf of Jews, such as one receives from the following remarks by Eugenio Zolli, who, at the time of the Nazi invasion, was the Rabbi of Rome and who witnessed some of the Vatican's on-the-spot activity:

The Holy Father sent by hand a letter to the bishops instructing them to lift the enclosure from convents and monasteries, so that they could become refuges for the Jews. I know of one convent where the sisters slept in the basement, giving up their beds to Jewish refugees. . . . Who could ever tell what has been done? The rule of severe enclosure falls, everything and all things are at the service of charity. . . . No hero in history has commanded such an army. . . . An army of priests works in cities and small towns to provide bread for the persecuted and passports for the fugitives. Sisters go into unheated canteens to give hospitality to women refugees. Orphans of all nations and religions are gathered together and cared for. No economic sacrifice is considered too great to help the innocent to flee to foreign lands from those who seek their death. . . . Sisters endure hunger to feed the refugees. Superiors go out in the night to meet strange soldiers who demand victims. They manage, at the risk of their lives, to convey the impression that they have none—they, who have several in their care. . . .

Pope Pius XII is followed by all with the fervor of that charity that fears not death. (*Before the Dawn*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954, pp. 140-141, 187-188.)

There is no mention in *Their Brothers' Keepers* of the desperate situation faced by the Jews of Rome when their city was invaded by the Germans. Professor Zolli's book, which discusses this crisis, mentions with gratitude the Pope's prompt offer to provide a large sum of money the Nazis demanded for the ransom of Jews.



Another omission in the story of Italy's occupation is the rescue of two hundred Jews who were hidden in Assisi by priests—again with the active help of the bishop. Aldo Brunacci, a concentration camp alumnus who had successfully hidden two Jews in his Assisi home, wrote:

Our chief center was the convent of San Quirico, where the visitors were housed until we could provide new ration books and papers necessary to enable them to live unmolested. All personal documents, the real ones, of our Jews, as well as their sacred books and religious objects, were hidden in cellars of the palace of the Bishop of Assisi, and from beginning to end he was the heart and soul of our work, which continued until liberation. (*Catholic Times*, London, April 19, 1946.)

There are other regrettable omissions. It is undoubtedly true that no one book could tell the entire story about these years, but the omissions weaken the effectiveness and authoritativeness of a book that claims to tell "the story." The book is neither so intensive (in details concerning situations mentioned) nor so extensive (in the completeness of the number of situations mentioned) as one would wish. The original manuscript, it is said, was much longer than the published version. Let us hope, therefore, that the author can interest some historical society or research foundation in printing the full manuscript in the near future.

Unreserved praise can be given to the unusually complete annotated bibliography. Some of the comments in it are so fascinating as to warrant inclusion in the main text. There is a happy portent in the author's comment at the beginning of these "Notes and References," when he says that he is

engaged at the present time in preparing a bibliography of the European-Jewish catastrophe under the Nazis and [that he has been] able to assemble to date about 60,000 pertinent bibliographical entries. The author could, therefore, draw upon this remarkably large amount of bibliographical information in order to select the material necessary for this book. Of course, only an infinitesimal portion, only the most relevant, is quoted in the following notes and references.

Besides the published material, the author also has had the chance to utilize some unpublished sources from the archives of [research institutions with which he is associated]. . . . Another source of important information was provided by interviews and exchanges of letters with

persons who willingly volunteered to supply the author with their personal materials, recollections, documents, letters, pictures . . . (p. 181).

We can therefore look forward to other contributions from Doctor Friedman and we owe him a great deal of gratitude for the labors that have gone into the present book. His work of collecting and preserving information on an ugly period of history that mankind is tempted to forget is of great significance. As he says in his eloquent conclusion:

For over a decade, in our time . . . a great evil manifested itself in the guise of a dictator. . . . All men were his victims, and yet in the end he was destroyed. . . . He was doomed to destruction as long as there was one man who persisted in his God-given right to say nay when the bayonet in his back prodded him to say aye. He was doomed to destruction as long as there was one Christian who unflinchingly obeyed the fundamental precept of his religion and helped a fellow man. One word epitomizes the evil that engulfed us—Hitler; one word evokes the redemption allowed to man—love.

The records, incomplete as they are, reveal the deeds of men and women who said nay heroically. . . . Our surviving civilization owes these people the grateful recognition they so richly deserve (p. 180).

For my own conclusion, I should like to repeat a prayer of one of the men "who said nay heroically." Count Schwerin von Schwanenfeld, a German Christian, was executed by the Nazis in September 1944, for participation in an abortive plot against Hitler. In his will, written just a few days before his death, he requested that in his forest of Sartowitz,

where the victims of the massacres of the late fall of 1939 are laid to rest, a very high oaken cross be erected as soon as the conditions of the time permit, with the following inscription: "Here lie from 1400 to 1500 Christians and Jews. May God have mercy on their souls and on their murderers." (*Dying We Live*, p. 45.)

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