



The Pope's Dilemma: Pius XII Faces Atrocities and Genocide in the Second World War (German and European Studies)

Jacques Kornberg

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Pope Pius XII presided over the Catholic Church during one of the most challenging moments in its history. Elected in early 1939, Pius XII spoke out against war and destruction, but his refusal to condemn Nazi Germany and its allies for mass atrocities and genocide remains controversial almost seventy years after the end of the Second World War.

Scholars have blamed Pius's inaction on anti-communism, antisemitism, a special emotional bond with Germany, or a preference for fascist authoritarianism. Delving deep into Catholic theology and ecclesiology, Jacques Kornberg argues instead that what drove Pius XII was the belief that his highest priority must be to preserve the authority of the Church and the access to salvation that it provided.

In *The Pope's Dilemma*, Kornberg uses the examples of Pius XII's immediate predecessors Benedict XV and the Armenian genocide and Pius XI and Fascist Italy, as well as case studies of Pius XII's wartime policies towards five Catholic countries (Croatia, France, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), to demonstrate the consistency with which Pius XII and the Vatican avoided confronting the perpetrators of atrocities and strove to keep Catholics within the Church. By this measure, Pius XII did not betray, but fulfilled his papal role.

A meticulous and careful analysis of the career of the twentieth century's most controversial pope, *The Pope's Dilemma* is an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the Catholic Church's wartime legacy.



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