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A Great Pope: PIUS XI: The Pope and the Man

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A GREAT POPE

PIUS XI: THE POPE AND THE MAN. By Zsolt Aradi. Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1958. 262p. \$4.50.

The author of this new life of Pius XI says that although he was repeatedly urged to undertake the writing of it, he was not at first anxious to do so. We are glad he did. The book is a very good book. It is entertaining, informative, satisfying and edifying. The author is judicious in the selection of his material and he has an eminently readable style.

The book gives us a fine picture of the boy and the man who was Achille Ratti. It is not often that we find a person so generously endowed. He was a linguist of no mean ability, a historian, a librarian, an astute diplomat, and a great bishop and pope.

Although of scholarly tastes, he gave freely of his time to apostolic work, and this zeal for souls grew stronger as he advanced in years. It breathes through all his encyclicals and inspired his keen perception of the work of the missions. He had an intimate realization of the universality of the Church. He made it clear that the Church was for all men. He encouraged and insisted on the development of a native priesthood everywhere, as some of his predecessors also did. But he was equally insistent that the native clergy should be composed of the best men available, and he demanded the best education for them so as to put them on the same level in every way with the foreign missionary.

It is not often realized that Pius XI was an author, and a prolific one. The bibliography of his works includes about a hundred books and articles. Most of them are on historical subjects. After several years as librarian of the Ambrosian Library at Milan he was appointed director of the Vatican Library. He made it his task to reorganize this ancient library according to the most modern methods.

The first World War changed the map of Europe in many ways. Poland regained her independence, lost centuries before in successive partitions by predatory neighbors. The redrawing of the boundaries in Central Europe was no easy thing. While an international commission wrestled with the political problems it involved, Achille Ratti, as the pope's representative in Poland, had to deal with the ecclesiastical problems. These were formidable, as it was very difficult to preserve neutrality as between the conflicting claims of Germans and Poles.

During his term as papal visitor to Poland, Ratti tried several times to go into Russia. His main interest was of course in the Russian Catholics, but he also wanted to give all the assistance he could to the Orthodox Christians. Although the Russian government refused to let him across its borders, he was able to save the lives

of a number of prelates of the Orthodox Church. Later, as pope, he sent the famous Papal Relief Expedition which did such good work in Russia during the time of the Famine.

Pius XI is known as the Pope of the Concordats. He effected a reconciliation between the Italian government and the papacy on the vexed question of the papal states. Although a resolute opponent of totalitarianism in all its forms, he tried to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with Hitlerian Germany in order to relieve the sufferings of the persecuted Catholics there.

Pius XI wrote some thirty encyclicals which constitute a perpetual monument to his ability as a teacher and his worthiness to occupy the Chair of Peter. By means of these encyclicals, he gave fresh impetus to Catholic education, reformed and reorganized the training of priests in seminaries, and exposed the evils of Nazism and Communism. He was about to take issue with the tyrannical regime set up by the Fascists in Italy when God called him to Himself.

The author relates all this swiftly, with an admirable economy of style. The picture of Pius XI that emerges is that of a man of high intelligence and deep sanctity, who devoted his whole self and his great and varied gifts to the service of Christ.

AUSTIN V. DOWD

SATYAGRAHA

CONQUEST OF VIOLENCE: THE GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT. By Joan V. Bondurant. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958. xv, 269 p. \$5.00.

In her preface, Dr. Bondurant disclaims any intention to write a biography of Gandhi or an essay on his political philosophy. The focus of her study is *satyagraha*—Gandhi's non-violent technique for dealing with a conflict situation. Her aim is to try to abstract "from the Gandhian experiments a theoretical key to the problem of social and political conflict." (p. vi).

Gandhi's theoretical explanation of *satyagraha* has three elements: truth, non-violence, self-suffering. The *satyagrahi* (one who engages in *satyagraha*) is a searcher for truth. Gandhi's translation of *satyagraha* is "truth-force." The *satyagrahi* is convinced that truth is on his side: his aim is not to triumph over his adversary but to convince him. At the same time, part of the *satyagrahi's* truthfulness is an awareness that no man can possess the full absolute truth concerning any given human situation. He himself might be mistaken; hence he is willing to learn from and even to be convinced by his adversary.