

with the somewhat undifferentiated use of terms such as “masculine,” “sportive,” or “conservative” in the context of Weimar fashion. It appears that the author takes the stability of these categories for granted, while in reality fashion – for men as well as women – witnessed the most dynamic and diverse developments in this decade. The multiple connotations surrounding these terms can be easily verified by a quick look into the popular and fashion press, including many magazines about men’s fashion, which proliferated in Weimar Germany.

The book’s final section consists of two chapters that are quite different in structure from the earlier chapters and from each other. Chapter 6 ventures into the period immediately after January 1933, when the Nazis started creating the “mythology” about the origins and rise of the movement in the previous decade. The author recounts the content of three propaganda films and some books set in the late years of the Weimar Republic that feature young uniformed Stormtroopers at the center of the heroic narratives. (It is not clear, though, why Homberger subsumes the films under the term “trilogy,” since they were produced by three different studios, directed by three different filmmakers, and had quite dissimilar reception histories.) *Hans Westmar, Einer von Vielen. Ein deutsches Schicksal aus dem Jahre 1929* – a fiction movie based on the life of Horst Wessel – was released in December 1933, after the initial version was rejected by the censors and personally by Joseph Goebbels earlier in the year. Of the three, *Hitlerjunge Quex. Ein Film vom Opfergeist der deutschen Jugend* – an UFA production directed by Hans Steinhoff which premiered in September 1933 – was by far the most cinematically sophisticated and effective as a propaganda piece. The *SA-Mann Brand*, discussed last in this chapter, was actually the first and most straightforward propaganda film to be produced after January 1933 (released in June 1933 by Bavaria Film) and became notorious for its vicious anticommunist stance.

The concluding chapter 7 revisits all the preceding themes within a case study about the rise of the SA in Hamburg between 1921 and 1933. It is longest chapter in the book and relies – in addition to known historical sources – on the unpublished memoirs by one of Hamburg’s highest-ranked SA officers, Alfred Conn, as well as Hamburg-based archives and periodicals. Ultimately, its engaging narrative serves as another, more contextualized confirmation of the monograph’s central contention that the study of ideology alone cannot account for the SA men’s “positive dual image” (181). It is namely through the exploration of the cultural history of the SA uniform that we can fully understand the mechanism through which the brownshirts acquired their public image of being simultaneously fearless, ruthless fighters and cultured agents of order.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000614

## **Der Diplomat und die Päpste. Die Mission des ersten deutschen Botschafters beim Heiligen Stuhl – Diego von Bergen 1920-1943**

**By Gregor Wand. Leiden and Boston: Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021. Pp. x + 254. Hardcover €69.00. ISBN: 978-3506760500.**

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The role of the German Foreign Office during the Nazi regime has gained increased attention since a commission of historians led by Eckart Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes, and Moshe

Zimmermann investigated its recent past in the early 2000s. The deep complicity of the German Foreign Office in the Nazi regime's discrimination, persecution, and eventual mass murder of European Jews was already established in one of the subsequent Nuremberg trials in the late 1940s. Despite the guilty verdicts delivered then, the early Cold War quickly led to a rehabilitation of German civil servants, including those in the Foreign Office. The West needed the Federal Republic of Germany and its elites to fight the communist Soviet Union. The resulting myth that the German Foreign Office had nothing to do with the Shoah but instead had been a center of anti-Nazi resistance was not publicly challenged until Christopher Browning's *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office* (1978).

Researchers so far have focused mostly on top Nazi diplomats such as Foreign Ministers Joachim von Ribbentrop and Constantin von Neurath. Diplomats from the second tier of Nazi leadership have attracted much less attention, if any at all. By looking into the biography of the first German ambassador to the Holy See, Diego von Bergen, the young historian Gregor Wand does two things: he helps close a research gap on the inner workings of the Foreign Office while simultaneously contributing to the history of the relations between the Vatican and the Third Reich. Readers might be surprised to learn that no German embassy existed at the Holy See before the Weimar Republic. The explanation lies in the peculiarities of Central European history. In the centuries of the Holy Roman Empire, German princedoms always sent representatives, but it was only in 1920 that the Prussian Embassy was converted into the Embassy of the German Reich.

Diego von Bergen became its first ambassador and served in this function for a record-breaking twenty-three years. During his tenure, he worked on the foundation of the new German Republic, Gustav Stresemann's reconciliation policy, but also served the Nazi regime and its genocidal war. Like most old-school diplomats socialized under the *Kaiser*, von Bergen was of noble background and never warmed to Weimar democracy, preferring instead an authoritarian state. When Hitler came to power in 1933, von Bergen stayed in his post as ambassador to the Vatican rather than resign: "In doing so, he conveyed to the Holy See and the international public the continuity in personnel that had also been brought about by the fact that Reich Foreign Minister Constantin von Neurath remained in the Reich government after January 30, 1933" (43).

Conservative traditional politicians like von Neurath and the Catholic vice-chancellor Franz von Papen helped with the successful signing of the Concordat between the Holy See and the Nazi government in 1933. This provided a significant public relations success for Germany and its diplomats, as the Concordat was seen by many as the pope's blessing for the new political realities under Hitler. The Vatican under Pope Pius XI and his Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli was indeed eager to find a *modus vivendi* with fascist Germany. Both Church leaders were no friends of the Nazis, but once the Nazis were in power, they believed that compromises with the regime might be in the Church's best interest.

Even with the 1933 treaty, relations between the Nazi state and the Catholic Church soon soured. It was the 1937 papal encyclical letter *Mit brennender Sorge* ("With Burning Concern") that became "the climax and turning point of the papal policy towards National Socialist Germany," as German historian Thomas Brechenmacher stated. Wand stresses that this public denunciation severely damaged the Nazi regime's image worldwide, including in its Catholic Axis partner Italy (157). Pius XI died in February 1939. His right-hand man, Eugenio Pacelli, followed on the papal throne as Pius XII. In early 1939, the Nazis sent a special envoy, Prince Philipp von Hessen, a German aristocrat and distant relative of the British royals, to the new pope. As new research informed by the Vatican archives shows, Pius XII was willing to go to great lengths to preserve peace in Europe and find a compromise with Hitler: "Once we have peace, the Catholics will be loyal, more than anyone else," Pius XII claimed in his talks with the Nazi emissary (David I. Kertzer, "The Pope's Secret Back Channel to Hitler," *The Atlantic* [2022]). War came, and the "peace" between the Nazi state and the Catholic Church remained fragile. Caught between the Nazi and communist dictatorships, the new pope rejected both but clearly identified "godless Communism" as the main

enemy of the Church. Pius XII found himself caught between his role as a universal moral authority and his position as protector of his Church. Ultimately, he never lost sight of the pope's main mission, as he saw it, "to maintain the unity and universality of the Catholic Church in a world at war" (Jacques Kornberg, *The Pope's Dilemma* [2015], 245). Helping Jews escape genocide, on the other hand, was not considered a top priority. Wand portrays the pope and the Vatican in a rather different light, putting much of the focus on the Nazis' powers of deception rather than the pope's priorities.

Von Bergen, since 1939 a member of the Nazi Party, was a faithful servant of the regime. One of his main duties was to deny the ongoing genocide: "In practice, this meant refusal to provide information, pursuit of active disinformation, and dispersal diplomacy in the knowledge of the actual goal of the Nazi crimes long before they reached Rome with the German occupation in October 1943" (211). Despite all these efforts, German diplomats could never be sure that the pope would not eventually speak out, particularly against the Nazis' enormous genocidal crimes. Early on, the Vatican received detailed reports about the Shoah from various sources. For instance, in March 1942 it learned about the deportation of 80,000 Slovak Jews to Poland, where most of them were to be murdered. Despite this knowledge, Pius XII never issued a clearly worded public statement against the mass murder of European Jews.

When von Bergen finally left his post in May 1943, the Third Reich was retreating on all fronts. His successor was his former boss, State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker, who was removed from the power center of Berlin and parked in Rome. Wand describes von Weizsäcker's relations with the Vatican leadership as frosty, defined by repeated rejections of peace initiatives by the German top diplomat. Wand's assessment is surprising, given the pope's strong postwar support for the Lutheran von Weizsäcker. Pius XII went above and beyond to shield the Nazi diplomat from prosecution at Nuremberg, but Wand does not discuss these important facts. Von Bergen died in 1944, so we can only speculate if the Vatican would have supported him in a similar manner.

Wand convincingly makes clear that the embassy of the Third Reich at the Holy See was an "integral part of National Socialist foreign policy" (8). His study, based on his doctoral dissertation, is timely and well researched, using a number of German archives, including some church archives. What his work misses is information from Italian archives, which would have been exceptionally helpful in understanding the Axis partner perspective. Also missing are Vatican records for the pontificate of Pius XII, since they were made accessible only very recently. In conclusion, Wand's book about ambassador Diego von Bergen is a valuable addition to the literature and, while aimed at scholars, is also accessible to a wider audience.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000791

## **Hans Litten – Anwalt gegen Hitler. Eine Biographie**

**By Knut Bergbauer, Sabine Fröhlich, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022. Pp. 383. Hardcover €26.00. ISBN: 978-3835351592.**

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The radical late-Weimar attorney, Hans Litten, has enjoyed numerous lives in Germany since his suicide in Dachau in February 1938. Through the determined effort of his mother,