

PUBLISHED BY
DAI BRITH

THE NATIONAL MONTHLY

National Jewish Monthly

MAY, 1940

XII Follows His Predecessor's Anti-Fascist Policy
Employing Jewish Scholars in the Vatican (p. 269)



THE POPE'S Jewish scholars

In Dramatic Move, the Vatican Employs Five "Non-Aryan" Authorities Who Had Been Degraded by Italian Fascism

By DR. EDWARD D. KLEINLERER

IN THE heart of officially anti-Semitic Italy, there is an island of tolerance where no racial laws hold sway. That "island" is the Vatican, in whose libraries and academies five famous Jewish scholars work, engaged by the present Pope Pius XII and his predecessor. All of them had been ousted from Italian universities.

The engaging of Jewish scholars serves as a concrete symbol of the Vatican's rejection of Premier Benito Mussolini's racial laws, which the late Pope Pius XI often denounced with vigor.

It is significant that the latest case was announced by *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's organ, less than 24 hours after Italy put new anti-Semitic legislation into effect. Professor Roberto Almagia, who had been dismissed from his chair at the University of Rome and from his many scientific positions, was appointed to restore and catalogue the old geographical maps in the Vatican library, and direct the geographical division of the world's most ancient collection of books, manuscripts, and maps.

★ Professor Almagia was one of the first victims of the fascists' recently adopted anti-Jewish policy, which was inaugurated as an expression of "perfect identity" with Nazi Germany. It came as an unexpected and terrible blow to Professor Almagia. His work and research in geography and allied fields were universally recognized as being among the greatest contributions of Italian geographers. His accomplishments had often been praised by the Government and by Italian academic bodies.

The Foreign Ministry had at one time entrusted him with preparation of a monumental work, "The History of Italian Explorers," which served as a model of erudition, style, and scrupulous research. In 1927 he had been a member of the Italian Geographical Mission to Palestine; he published a monograph which was an important contribution to knowledge of the Holy Land's topography and geography. His geographical studies of Dalmatia were hailed by the Italian press as scientific justification for Italian claims to that region.

But all his contributions counted for nothing when Il Duce decided to introduce anti-Semitism into Italy. Dr. Almagia's books disappeared from Italian libraries. His geographic manuals, in use for many years, were eliminated from colleges and universities. Deprived of his university chair and his

FOR fourteen years, Dr. Edward D. Kleinlerer was correspondent in Italy for various newspapers and services, including the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Honored by the Italian government, married to an Italian Jewess, respected by all his fellow journalists, he was nevertheless exiled from the country when anti-Semitism became official. He is now living in New York.—Editor.

membership in the Royal Academy "dei Lincei," Professor Almagia faced the alternatives of exile from his beloved country or a life of hardship. He was saved from this fate by his recent appointment to the Vatican staff.

Another victim of fascist discriminatory laws who has found haven in the Vatican is Professor Giorgio del Vecchio, authority on civil and international law, and first rector of Rome University under the fascist regime and for fifteen years dean of its law faculty. He had devoted considerable energy to building a great "university city."

A member of the fascist party since its founding, he was one of Mussolini's most ardent supporters. Appointed rector of the University by Premier Mussolini, he inaugurated a series of fascist reforms. In 1926 he reopened the university's Catholic

chapel, which had been closed by the pre-fascist administration. This led to rumors that he had been converted, but he sent a formal denial to Rome newspapers, declaring that he had no intention of abandoning the faith of his forefathers.

Even when the Government began to veer towards an alignment with Germany, Professor del Vecchio remained steadfast in his devotion to Mussolini. Finally, when the Rome-Berlin axis brought on the adoption of anti-Semitic laws by Italy, Dr. del Vecchio in October, 1938, was ousted from the "Citta Universitaria" which he had helped to create. He was removed from all academic and honorary positions.

But if the anti-Semitic Government has no use for a scholar of his standing, the Vatican does. Pope Pius XII engaged him for the Vatican library staff and made him a member of the Pontifical Academy of Science, entrusting him with research in the field of Roman jurisprudence. His appointment was announced in *Osservatore Romano*.

★ In engaging famous Jewish scholars ousted by the Government, the present Pope follows the policy initiated by the late Pope Pius XI. The latter engaged Levi della Vida, one of the world's greatest authorities in Islamic studies, to prepare a catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in the Vatican library. This fact aroused much comment at the time, for Professor della Vida had shortly before been dismissed from Rome University for refusing to take the new fascist oath of allegiance decreed for university instructors.

But Pope Pius XI was determined to place science and scholarship above political considerations, regardless of the feelings of the fascist regime. He evidenced this determination again when he made Professor Levi-Civita, Italy's greatest living physicist, a member of the papal scientific academy, the Scientific Senate of the Catholic Church, when it became clear that Premier Mussolini intended to bar Jews from the newly created fascist Academy of Sciences. He also appointed him chairman of the commission entrusted with the awarding of the papal prize, "Premio Pio XI."

Shortly thereafter, Professor Levi-Civita reported over the Vatican radio about the latest achievements in the field of physics. It was the first time in history that a Jew broadcast from the center of Catholicism.

(Continued on page 283)



Prof. Roberto Almagia, one of the five Jewish scholars now employed by the Vatican.



NEW HAVEN, CONN.:—The Connecticut Council of B'nai B'rith Lodges helped Horeb Lodge here celebrate its 84th birthday. Left to right: Robert Drazen, chairman of the affair; Stanley High, nationally known writer and radio commentator, who was the main speaker; and Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin of Connecticut, guest of honor.

admits as much. He says in a footnote on page 37:

"When I use biblical tradition in . . . an autocratic and arbitrary way, draw on it for confirmation whenever it is convenient and dismiss its evidence without scruple when it contradicts my conclusions, I know full well that I am exposing myself to severe criticism concerning my method and that I weaken the force of my proofs . . ."

Nevertheless, the aforementioned theories of Freud's have great suggestive value. They will shock tender-minded people. But when one comes to understand these ideas in their fundamental meaning, one finds them of great help toward comprehending mankind and life in general—also toward the grasp of religion in a form suitable for the 20th century.

Freud's life and work should have an especial appeal to readers of *The National Jewish Monthly*, for he was a member of a B'nai B'rith lodge in Vienna. Indeed, he declared once that it was among his fellow B'nai B'rith members in his native city that he found sympathetic understanding early in his career when the world at large turned a hostile cold shoulder toward him. Also, there is stirring appeal and poetic irony in the closing years of his life—his ejection at the age of 82 by neurotic nazis from the city of his birth, whose most eminent living son he was, and his dauntless completion of his historic work in his new home in London. He was a giant of our time—a giant of all time. Some day Hitler will be remembered chiefly as the maniac who exiled Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Sigmund Freud.

THE POPE'S Jewish scholars (Continued from page 269)

Although prominent among the Vatican's scholars, he has remained active in the Jewish field. He is a member of the academic board of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has helped many Jewish scholars and students who were victims of racial discrimination.

And this scholar, so concerned over the fate of his fellow Jews, was so highly regarded at the Vatican that when the president of the papal academy died it was rumored for weeks that

Levi-Civita was in line for the post.

Another of the group of professors dismissed from Rome University for refusing to subscribe to the fascist oath of allegiance was Professor Vito Volterra, famous mathematician and physicist. He was deposed from the presidency of the Royal Academy "dei Lincei" and even received threatening letters. His democratic tendencies made him *persona non grata* with the fascist regime.

As a scientist he ranked high, holding honorary degrees from the Universities of Sorbonne, Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh, Oslo, Stockholm, and others and being president of the International Institute of Weights and Measures. In 1931 he aroused considerable discussion by a series of lectures at the Sorbonne in Paris, in which he developed original and penetrating theories on the relation of mathematics to social phenomena.

That was his last lecture course at the Sorbonne, for soon afterward he came into the Italian Government's disfavor and could not obtain a passport to travel abroad, despite the fact that he was a member of the Italian Senate and despite the intervention of noted scholars abroad.

Soon afterward Pope Pius XI again gave evidence of his regard for scholarship when he appointed Dr. Volterra to the Papal Academy of Sciences.

✱ The late Pope will always be remembered for his devotion to learning, a devotion which knew no bounds of race or creed.

In his speech opening the academic year of his Academy of Sciences on January 30, 1938—his last appearance before this body—he said: "God is the Master of the sciences, and all human beings are admitted equally, without distinction of race or religion, to participate, to share, to study and to explore truth and science."

This was what guided the late Pope in gathering in to the bosom of the Vatican the great Jewish scholars cast out by fascist Italy. And this same love of learning guides the present Pope, ruler of the island of Christian tolerance amid the sea of fascist intolerance.

HOUSTON, TEX.:—William Nathan, District No. 7 Hillel chairman, has launched a campaign to raise \$5,000 to aid German refugee students.

A label that spells character
**ROGERS
PEET**
Makers of Fine Clothes



Rogers Peet
**NAILHEAD*
WORSTEDS**

Suits \$55
featured at

Unobtrusive dots suggesting the heads of tiny nails. A pattern that appeals to any man who likes *character* in his clothes.

*Trademark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

**ROGERS PEET
COMPANY**

Fifth Avenue at 41st Street
13th Street at Broadway
Warren Street at Broadway
Liberty Street at Broadway

And in Boston
Tremont St. at Bromfield St.