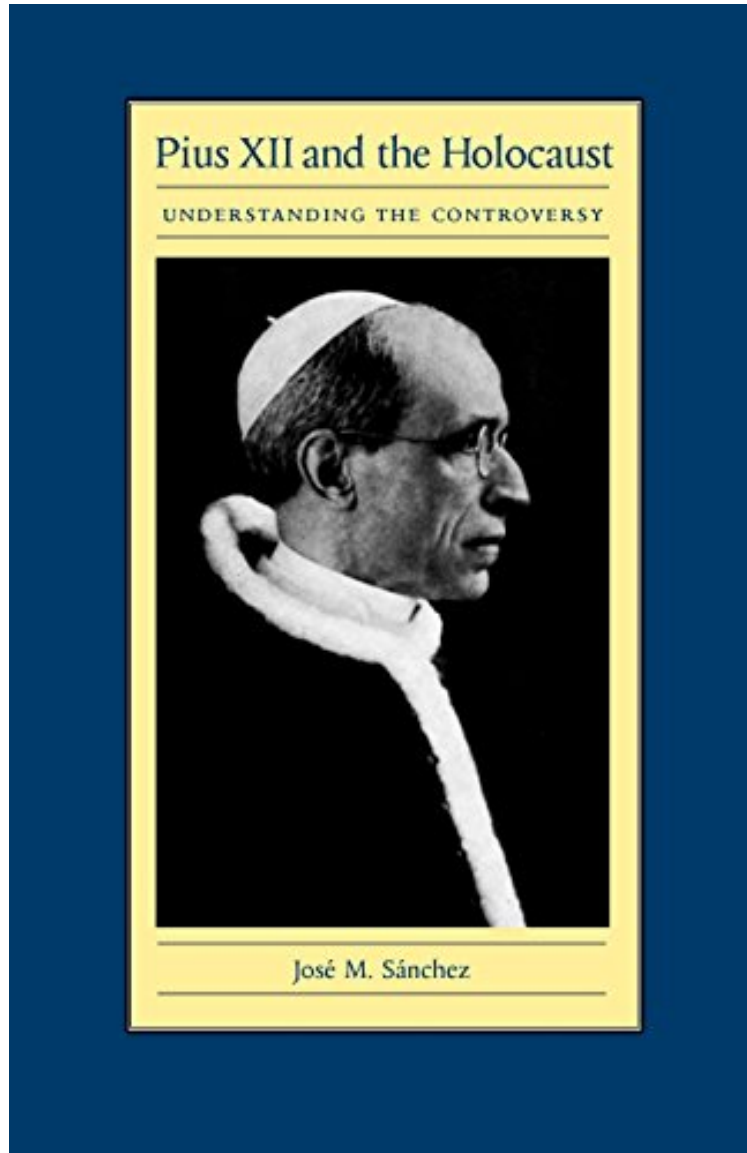


[FREE] Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy

Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy

Jose M. Sanchez

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Jose M. Sanchez : Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An objective and scholarly examination of the historical literature on the "silence of Pius."By Peter S. BradleyThis book is a comprehensive, objective survey and assessment of the arguments pro and con on the putative silence of Pius XII on the Holocaust. The author, Jose M. Sanchez, is a

professor of history at Saint Louis University. His purpose was to survey the arguments found in the major scholarly and popular works to judge the strengths of various arguments for or against Pius' behavior during the war. Sanchez approaches this work as a professional historian, albeit he admits up front that he is a practicing Catholic. Nonetheless, his work does not come across as an "apologetic" to defend Pius; in fact, it seemed to me that Sanchez bent over backwards to find merit in the criticism of Pius. The first issue that Sanchez approaches is what is meant by the "silence" of Pius. Sanchez notes that critics of Pius often use the term "silence" in a vague way as if to include the entire period of Nazi rule from 1933 through 1945, which is inane, since, as Sanchez points out, the Holocaust didn't start until 1941. The words "the silence of Pope Pius" have acquired a life of their own, meaning things to different critics, sometimes having no connection to Pius at all. The controversy has become a free for all for anti-Catholics and Catholic defenders, anti-clericals and clericals, libertarians and authoritarians, allowing all to vent their feelings and frustration regardless of the facts. [p.3] One of the things that Sanchez is good at, which is often forgotten by critics and defenders, is that history unfolds in pieces. The Nazis of 1933 were not the Nazis of 1942. Likewise, even in 1942, even with knowledge of Nazi atrocities, as Sanchez points out, opponents of the Nazis still didn't necessarily conclude that the Nazis were aiming at total racial annihilation. We know it now. We can't get that central fact out of our minds. But the people then didn't. And that fact separates us from them. Sanchez does an excellent job of summarizing Pius's biography and character. His thesis is that while the attempts to impugn Pius' motives are not substantiated by the evidence, nonetheless Pius' character - rigid, humorless, cold, diplomatic - is the reason that subsequent generations have turned on Pius after Pius' death and the publication of Hochuth's "The Deputy," particularly when compared to his charismatic successor, John XXIII. This seemed to me to be the place where Sanchez was stretching to show his fairness and objectivity. Most people alive today don't remember Pius at all. John XXIII was followed by Paul VI, who was no charismatic whirlwind. The change in the perception of popes as "rock stars" was really John Paul II. Frankly, I think Sanchez misses the obvious point that critiques have some other agenda than issue of Pius in World War II. Rabbi David Dalin in *The Myth of Hitler's Pope: Pope Pius XII And His Secret War Against Nazi Germany* points out that much of the anti-Pius criticism is an intra-Catholic dispute that involves liberal Catholics who want to knock down, basically John Paul II, who denied their cultural dreams. On the other hand, Sanchez does acknowledge that for many, Pius does give a single human face for anti-Catholics to demonize, which is not far off from Rabbi Dalin. Sanchez also does a nice job of laying out what Pius did say about the Jewish Holocaust during the war. Pius directly - or his proxies - said quite a lot. Pius condemned the Nazis for their racism and the murder of defenseless people on the grounds of nationality and race. The Vatican radio and newspaper condemned the Nazi atrocities against Jews. Pius protested against Nazi atrocities to the Nazis. When I got done with that section, it seemed to me that the issue boiled down to, why didn't Pius himself personally specifically denounce Nazi atrocities against Jews and only Jews between the beginning of 1942 - when information about Nazi atrocities was probably beginning to filter through to him - and September of 1943 - when the Nazis occupied Rome? When you put it that way, it seems like the issue is no longer about Pius' motivations, but rather about how Pius' critics can thread their way through the facts in order to find something - anything - that Pius didn't do in order to gin up their case. On which point, Sanchez is good - almost the first historian I've read to say explicitly - in pointing out that our current perspective on the Holocaust was not necessarily what the people of the time were experiencing. Today, we have the luxury of focusing on the Jewish Holocaust, but in doing that we lose sight of all of the other victims of the Nazis. What Pius was dealing with was an undifferentiated human disaster, where not only Jews were being killed but Poles were being killed in equal numbers. Pius didn't explicitly address the Polish Holocaust either, which implies that there was something other than indifference or anti-Semitism at work. Further, Sanchez points out that Pius was not only dealing with the Nazis during this period; the Communists had been actively engaging in the murder of Catholics in Spain up until 1939. Sanchez then deals seriatim with the reasons proposed for Pius's putative silence. He quickly knocks off the ones that he doesn't find persuasive at all. For example, he gives no credence to the claim that Pius was an anti-semitic. As he notes: // This is the unstated under-current in the arguments of many of Pius' strongest critics. Few say it outright, because they regard it as a fact - taken for granted - given the history of the papacy and the hothouse of ecclesiastical politics and training in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where Jews were viewed not only as "Christ-killers" but more importantly as purveyors of cultural modernism at a variance with traditional Christianity. It is also the simplest explanation for the critics of the Pope. // [p. 71] A problem for the theory is that it is essentially unsubstantiated or based on a distortion of the record. Cornwell's putative quotes about Pius' supposed anti-Semitic statements from his time in Communist occupied Munich is dismissed by Historian Istvan Deak, who is not sympathetic to Pius, but finds the comments "[not] convincing ... proof of Pacelli's anti-Semitism." [p. 73.] (Sanchez also points out that Ronald Rychlak in *Hitler, the War and the Pope* demolishes Cornwell's interpretation and reveals Cornwell's inadequacy as an historian. [p. 5, n. 9]) Sanchez finds the anti-Semitic charge unsubstantiated on the grounds that Pius treated Jews and Catholic Poles alike. [p. 74.] Separating the Jewish wheat from the Catholic chaff would seem to be an insurmountable problem for the critics. Sanchez also believes that the claim that Pius was motivated by fear concerning the security of the Vatican or fear of capture or concern for Rome is unlikely. For much of the war, Italy was a German ally and the Mussolini showed no interest in alienating Italian Catholics. [p. 74 -

77.]Sanchez also does not credit that idea that Pius acted the way he did because "Vatican diplomacy was always cautious." Sanchez points out that Vatican diplomacy can be bold - as when dealing with Communism after 1945 or with Mussolini before 1945 [p. 94], but Vatican diplomacy is mostly "prudent." However, Pius could show that he was not always prudent, such as when he acted as the intermediary between anti-Nazi Germans and the British. [p. 94]Sanchez give more credence to other reasons, including Pius' stated reason that he wanted to remain neutral in order to mediate an end to the war. Although this seemed unlikely under Hitler, and particularly after the unconditional surrender policy was adopted by the Allies, there was always the chance of an overthrow of Hitler, which could change the game. [p. 110 - 112] Sanchez scores a solid point on this subject://The German conspirators of the July 20, 1944 plot, believed that a compromise was possible with the Allies; they would assassinate Hitler and set up a government of national restoration and give up Germany's gains. The Allies they contacted told them to go ahead, but said they could make no prior commitments. If the German conspirators accepted this proviso and went ahead with their plans, it is difficult to fault the Pope for making the same assumption - namely that a compromise was not out of the question.// [p. 110 - 111]Sanchez also knocks down the canard that if Pius had only condemned the Nazis or Hitler, then German Catholics would have risen to stop Hitler and the war. Sanchez, again, makes a point that few - actually, none of the historians who I have read - have ever made, namely the effect of the Kulturkampf on the German Catholic psyche://Let it be said at the outset that the German bishops, always with some exceptions, were scarred by Bismarck's Kulturkampf of the 1870s; they were particularly sensitive to the charge that they were not good Germans because they owed their allegiance to the Pope rather than to the German state. They felt this charge deeply, and as a result were inclined to give unqualified support to the nation, particularly in World War I.// [p. 81]Sanchez points out that Pius had grounds to fear that if given a choice between their faith and their nation, German Catholics would choose their nation. In fact, Pius' nuncio to Germany, Cesare Orsenigo (who for the first time I learn was disliked by Pius for being weak with the Nazis), was telling Pius that he feared mass apostasy "unless the clergy appeased the regime and relieved members of the church of the conflict of conscience to which they were not equal." [p. 101] Sanchez makes a point that I have only slowly formed from reading in this area, namely://The Nazi regime commanded an immensely powerful state. Most Germans, whatever their religion, if put to the test would choose their state over their church because it was the more immediately powerful of the two. It is a fact of modern life, historian perceptively notes, that, as in nations everywhere, "a German Catholic thought of himself as a German who happened to be Catholic, not the reverse." For the Pope to have asked German Catholics to oppose the brutal Nazi regime would have been for him to ask for heroic resistance on the part of the people; and while there are instances of Christians who resisted the regime, they paid for it with their lives. The mass of people were not capable of such heroic actions.// [p. 101]Sanchez also knocks down the canard that Pius feared Communism and therefore was pro-Hitler. The evidence that this is false is too strong to put much time on it, including Pius acting as the conduit for anti-Nazi Germans to the British. Even John Cornwell's execrable "Hitler's Pope" doesn't accept this theory. For his part, Sanchez notes that while Pius might have felt that Germany could be a bulwark against Communism, Hitler - who had ceded half of Poland to the Communists in a cynical violation of its treaty with Poland - was not a bulwark against Communism. [p. 105] Further, Pius also refused to condemn Nazi atrocities because then he would have been obliged to condemn Communist atrocities. Finally, Pius also permitted American Catholics to provide aid to the "Russian people" even if it was aiding the Communist party. (p. 106.)Sanchez ultimately concludes that the best explanation for Pius not giving an unqualified or clear condemnation of the Nazi holocaust was a combination of his communication style, which tended to couch things in diplomatic language, and his feat that a sterner condemnation would make things worse for the victims of Nazi aggression. Pius himself explained on numerous occasions that he was concerned that a condemnation would have brought down an even worse persecution on the Jews, and others, than they were already experiencing. [p. 116] Likewise, contemporary and subsequent witnesses corroborated this concern. [p. 117] This concern was clearly based in fact since Dutch Archbishop Johannes de Jong's public protest against the deportation of Dutch Jews resulted in greater persecution by the Germans, including the deportation of Jews who had converted to Catholicism. [p. 117] Defenders and detractors agree that fear of retribution was a factor in Pius' approach but they dispute its significance. [p. 118] Many of the detractors play "Monday Morning Quarterback" arguing that things could not have gotten worse for the Jews, but they ignore the fact that Pius was not privy to the Nazi's plans of total extermination://The difficulty with this question is that it assumes that Pius knew that Germans were going to kill all the Jews. It is here that the problem of the time sequence is crucial for understanding the Pope's actions. It was, of course, common knowledge that the Jews were being persecuted, herded into ghettos, and transported to eastern Europe. By late 1941, the Pope knew that large numbers of Jews were being killed by the Germans. Did he know that the Germans intended to kill all the Jews? If so, when did this fact become apparent to him?Another facet of the problem is that by mid-1943 when Pius certainly knew about the ferocity of the German terror against the Jews, he was also aware of the German terror against all people. Did Pius distinguish among the victims of the Nazi terror? The Germans did not kill all the Poles, or Greeks, or French, or other subject people. But they might be tempted to kill more if provoked by the Pope, and it appears that Pius so believed. Furthermore, there were thousands of priests - both Germans and Polish - in German concentration camps who might have been the victim of Nazi reprisals for a papal protest; and everywhere there were

Jews who had converted to Catholicism who had, in many cases, so far been spared, and who might also have suffered.// [p. 119]Another Pope might have made a different decision. Was Pius' decision right or wrong? On the whole, it seems right, but at the very least it was not a dishonorable decision. Sanchez' s writing style is easily accessible. I tore through this rather short - approximately 177 pages - book in short order. Sanchez goes for the key issues and he brings a broad viewpoint to the issue, which is a nice change of the typically narrow-focus and buried assumptions in most such books. On the whole, I thought his treatment was fair, and I came away with the conclusion - his conclusion, actually - that the critics are extremists, who want a Pope with powers that even the most pious Catholic doesn't expect from popes. Sanchez concludes://It is easy to criticize both defenders and critics, to take a middle position and argue that both are extremists. In fact, most of the Pope's critics tend to extremism, while the defenders tend toward moderation. This is because the critics have taken the position that the Holocaust would have been much diminished, or even averted by strong papal action, while defenders of the Pope argue more convincingly that a strong papal protest would have had little effect on the Nazi machine of destruction.// [p. 178]And://What seems apparent is that throughout the years of controversy, the critics of Pius (and his defenders, less so) have tended to make their judgments less on the basis of an impartial reading of the documents than on their preconceived sentiments. This situation probably will not change. Pius remains an alluring target for those opposed to clericalism or the papacy or the Church or the clergy, or simply to authoritarian systems.// [p. 179]This is a very good resource on the subject. I recommend it highly. 18 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Balanced, Scholarly View of Pius XII's Role in HolocaustBy Mark LeeWhen William Shirer published his standard work "The Rise and Fall of Hitler and the Third Reich" in 1960, about 15 years had passed since the end of WWII. At that time, Pius XII - deceased two years previously - was a minor character receiving no undue attention in the involvement of the terrible Holocaust two decades earlier. In 1963, Rolf Hochhuth released his play, "The Deputy", and charged the late Pope with not forcefully protesting the Jewish slaughter. Over time, the "silence of Pius XII" became an indictment of a particular man (while the various other silences of persons great and small were largely brushed aside). There is no doubt that Catholic history vis-a-vis the Jews in general ("Constantine's Sword," James Carroll) and early 20th century Protestant Christian thought in particular ("Nazism, Liberalism, and Christianity: Protestant Social Thought in Germany and Great Britain 1925-1937," Kenneth C. Barnes) worked accidentally or otherwise with the neo-pagan "Volk" philosophies in Nazi Germany in such a fashion as to allow an abomination in human behavior. With the publication of the popular (and provocatively titled) "Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII" in 1999, John Cornwell helped direct decades of frustration at one man: Pius XII. Apologists for "the Catholic position" quickly lined up ("Pius XII and the Second World War," Fr. Pierre Blet), and with battle lines drawn the student of history was left to wonder if hyperbole and polemic speech would ever allow for a sensible investigation of the matter. I believe Jose M. Sanchez answered that call. In this book, Dr. Sanchez evaluates the problems and determines the issues, renders a concise history of the controversy and proceeds to examine the evidence: What type of life did Eugenio Pacelli lead before becoming Pius XII? What was his personality like? How did later changes to the papacy affect hindsight on the papacy of Pius XII? What were his feelings with regard to fascism and communism and how did they affect his action or inaction on various matters? Pius XII is painted as a man who was refined, aloof, painfully diplomatic by nature and training, and probably out of his element in a world where people were gassing and incinerating their fellow men, women and children. What did Pius XII know? What should he have known? Pius is criticized where appropriate: He apparently took no action in Catholic Croatia against the genocide there in spite of the fact that he had more power there than in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. Did Pius really fear that a papal protest would generate a greater retaliation against those whom he would intend to protect? All these issues and more are examined in this lucid, concise and scholarly treatment. At the end of the day, Pius is neither condemned nor exonerated. But the reader comes away with a more clear view of a troubled man who bore an incredible weight and has been judged in wildly divergent ways over the last four decades. 13 of 22 people found the following review helpful. DisappointingBy S. A. MearsI bought this book because I knew Dr. Sanchez when I was a student at Saint Louis University. While I agree this book is meticulously researched, the lack of any real analysis of the material is disturbing. Dr. Sanchez refutes many of Pius XII's detractors, albeit obtusely, but does not show the same critiques of Pius's defenders. If he was grading a paper this approach would not be acceptable. I kept reading hoping that at the end there would be an analysis of all the works and some kind of conclusion -- unfortunately there was not. Dr. Sanchez is a good writer -- something many contemporary historians cannot accomplish. But the lack of analysis and a conclusion, make this a very disappointing work. I could not recommend this work to anyone. Dr. Sanchez admits his lifelong Catholicism, but I feel that this may have clouded his work. I would have respected an outright defense, if well-argued, much better than an attempt to be "balanced" but never ending with a true weight of Pius and his actions during this most horrendous time in history. I expected better from a scholar such as Dr. Sanchez.

Pope Pius XII's alleged silence in the face of the destruction of the European Jews during World War II has been the subject of a fierce controversy that has continued unabated ever since Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* made the charge so spectacularly in 1963. Numerous critics have accused Pius of everything from deliberate anti-Semitism to collusion

with the Nazi regime, while equally partisan defenders have argued that his silent diplomacy saved hundreds of thousands of Jews and other innocent victims from Nazi terror. So contentious has Pius' role become that the phrase "the silence of Pius XII" has taken on a life of its own, beyond the facts. In this highly accessible work, Jos M. Sanchez offers a new approach to the controversy. He discusses the reasons given for Pius' behavior by the significant authors who have contributed to the dispute and evaluates their findings in the light of the published documents. He studies the controversial events that critics have cited to prove their contentions about the Pope, from his role in the negotiation of the German concordat of 1933 to the end of World War II in 1945. Sanchez provides a full examination of Pius' public and private comments on the war and the destruction of the European Jews. This analysis moves outside the traditional views to rephrase the issues. It is the first work to clearly and completely summarize the basic charges and defenses. It is also the first to bring to the dispute a full treatment of Pius' personality in the context of the institutional framework within which he operated. With a conclusion that summarizes the findings and offers the author's judgment on the issues, this study will enable readers to evaluate and understand one of the most heated controversies of modern times. Jos M. Sanchez is professor of history at Saint Louis University. He is the author of several works, including *The Spanish Civil War as a Religious Tragedy*. REVIEWS "One of the hottest arguments among twentieth-century historians concerns Pope Pius XII's response to the Holocaust. Was Pius Hitler's Pope, as John Cornwell's 1999 best-seller styled him? Or was he, as his apologists insist, the foremost defender of all the peoples Nazism targeted for destruction? Sanchez measures both positions' claims against the available evidence. He is hampered by the same 75-year lock on papal documents that frustrates other researchers (Cornwell gained permission to see some of Pius' papers but, Sanchez argues, viewed them through the lens of disapproval) but not by preconceptions. He sketches Pius' life, the issues, and existing sources of information, then assesses what Pius could have known about the Holocaust, parses his statements about World War II, considers various motives advanced to explain his policies, discusses his personality, and imagines the effects had Pius strongly protested Nazi oppression, especially of the Jews. He concludes that Pius' dual responsibilities as vicar of Christ and leader of the church became impossible to reconcile. Indispensable for, as the subtitle says, understanding the controversy" Booklist "After the hype associated with John Cornwell's 1999 work *Hitler's Pope*, this careful, scholarly study of Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust is a refreshing contribution to a debate that continues more than a half century after the end of World War II. Sanchez thoughtfully examines the various arguments on both sides of a controversy that will likely never be resolved. In doing so, he presents a dispassionate, documented tome that exhibits a high degree of fairness. Sanchez began his research in 1998 to provide a fresh, balanced look at a topic on which most authors have found it necessary to weigh in heavily on one side or the other. . . . Sanchez's treatment is ideal for students of history and anyone interested in an objective analysis of a contro

From Publishers Weekly After the hype associated with John Cornwell's 1999 work *Hitler's Pope*, this careful, scholarly study of Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust is a refreshing contribution to a debate that continues more than a half century after the end of World War II. Sanchez, a professor of history at St. Louis University, thoughtfully examines the various arguments on both sides of a controversy that will likely never be resolved. In doing so, he presents a dispassionate, thoroughly documented tome that exhibits a high degree of fairness. Sanchez began his research in 1998 to provide a fresh, balanced look at a topic on which most authors have found it necessary to weigh in heavily on one side or the other. He assesses claims ranging from allegations that the late pope was an anti-Semite to the defense that the pontiff did not speak out more forcefully against the Nazi persecution of the Jews because he feared he would make things worse for the victims. Sanchez's conclusions offer nods to both the critics and defenders of Pius XII, but because his summary statement is more gray than black or white, readers looking for the sort of spice dished up by *Hitler's Pope* will doubtless be left disappointed. Sanchez's treatment is ideal for students of history and anyone truly interested in an objective analysis of a controversial figure. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist One of the hottest arguments among twentieth-century historians concerns Pope Pius XII's response to the Holocaust. Was Pius Hitler's Pope, as John Cornwell's 1999 best-seller styled him? Or was he, as his apologists insist, the foremost defender of all the peoples Nazism targeted for destruction? Sanchez measures both positions' claims against the available evidence. He is hampered by the same 75-year lock on papal documents that frustrates other researchers (Cornwell gained permission to see some of Pius' papers but, Sanchez argues, viewed them through the lens of disapproval) but not by preconceptions. He sketches Pius' life, the issues, and existing sources of information, then assesses what Pius could have known about the Holocaust, parses his statements about World War II, considers various motives advanced to explain his policies, discusses his personality, and imagines the effects had Pius strongly protested Nazi oppression, especially of the Jews. He concludes that Pius' dual responsibilities as vicar of Christ and leader of the church became impossible to reconcile. Indispensable for, as the subtitle says, understanding the controversy. Ray Olson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved An engrossing read. The book is well-written and deals with a topic which has hitherto generated more heat than light." -- Prof. Frank J. Coppa, St. John's University Sanchez describes the facts as they happened, rather than as others would like them to have happened. This carries conviction." -- Prof. John S. Conway, University of British Columbia The book delivers on the

promise of its subtitle.... The best short introduction to the issues yet published...." -- Eugene J. Fisher, America
This is the best introduction for anyone interested in one of the most intriguing, controversial topics of the twentieth
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