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Cultivating a New Tomorrow:
Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in Conflict with the Catholic Church

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Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany both desired to create a new generation in order to bring about a society different than the latent liberal one of the nineteenth century.[1] Youth were a cornerstone of the creation of a new national community and thus the implementation of this ideal.[2] However, both Italy and Germany came into conflict with the Catholic Church over this issue. For the Church, youth education was a way to form the next generation of Catholics and ensure the future of its teachings.[3] It was also key in fulfilling the Church's goal of creating a Christian society.[4] The ways in which each entity sought to cultivate youth was differentiated by gender. However, both the Church and the fascist states were interested in cultivating youth as a whole. Essentially, the conflict between the Catholic Church and the fascist states over youth was a battle to fulfill different ideologies and shape the people of a nation.

Nevertheless, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were countries with different relations with the Catholic Church. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that, in both states, the drive to control youth operated within a complex relationship between Church and state. Furthermore, the specific role of the Catholic Church in Italy and Germany resulted in a distinctive context for the conflict over youth in each country. It is therefore essential to address the unique characteristics of the Catholic experience in both countries as well as the place of Protestantism in Germany. The conflict over youth resulted from the same basic principle, in that both the fascist states and the Church had their own vision for the future and attempted to fulfill those visions by capturing the consciences of youth. However, the progression and outcome of this battle in each country was different due to historical and cultural disparities. Nevertheless, in both states the extent of the Church's right to educate and shape youth was a contentious issue during the period of fascist rule.[5] While the fascist states engineered their new generation, the Church worked to preserve certain rights in order to maintain its traditional power structures as well as its influence on the

young.[6] This tension was directly addressed through agreements between both states and the Vatican and through later exchanges on the meaning of these agreements. State action that attempted to limit the Church's rights and the consequent opposition by the Church to these actions further complicated the issue of youth. Ultimately, the battle between the fascist states and the Catholic Church over youth, while diverging in its specific context and outcome in each state, demonstrated the resilience of the Church in retaining aspects of its traditional power and worldview in the face of fascist efforts to remake society.

Essential to understanding the context of the conflict between Church and state during the fascist regimes is knowledge of the place of the Catholic Church in both countries. Italy was a majority Catholic nation and the Catholic Church had historically made its home territory within the Italian heartland. This meant that the influence of the Church on Italian life was immense, especially when compared to countries at a further geographic distance. The closeness in proximity of the Italian dioceses to Rome gave Church hierarchy a powerful influence on Italian society. Since Rome was the heart of Catholicism, the Church had a justification to claim moral authority over Italy and thus penetrate its social fabric.[7] The greatest support for the Church's authority was from the rural Italian peasantry. Those who ruled in Italy prior to the *Risorgimento,* or its unification into one state, often found it difficult to influence this group. Thus, the Church's power preceding Italian unification rivaled that of the state in many cases. The Church's popular success was due in large part to its interest in welfare through actions such as caring for the sick and destitute. However, it also catered to the powerful, as an alliance with the Church was often a status symbol for the elite in Italian society.[8] Prior to the *Risorgimento* the Church had claimed Rome and a large part of the Italian mainland as the heart of its international empire.[9] However, with the unification of Italy in the mid to late nineteenth

century, the Papal States disintegrated and Pope Pius IX gave the Italian government no recognition by Catholics or the Church. This created a long-lasting divide between Italy and the Catholic Church, often called the Roman Question.[10] However, despite its loss of land, the Catholic Church in Italy was still a deeply influential force. It was national in scope and influenced Italian society through the promotion of ideas about morality and the formation of a popular culture and thus entrenched itself into the social fabric of the country.[11]

Unlike Italy, Catholicism in Germany was a religious minority. During the late nineteenth century Catholics were only around forty percent of the German population, the rest of which was heavily Protestant.[12] Thus, when considering religion in Germany it becomes necessary to address Protestantism. While the Protestant churches in Germany did find some of the state's youth policies concerning, overall the conflict between Nazi Germany and Protestantism over youth was not as ideologically motivated as the conflict with the Catholic Church. In fact, Protestant social and ethical theory was more closely aligned with the values of Nazism than Catholicism was.[13] For example, Protestantism rejected clerical authority, accepted non-denominational schools as a way to disrupt Catholic influence, and had a history of nationalist rhetoric. All of these attributes aligned more with Nazi values than Catholicism did.[14] Moreover, Protestant youth groups were smaller in size and less centralized than Catholic ones, and in part due to their similarities in social theory, were incorporated into the Nazi youth organization earlier.[15] While by 1933 a majority of German Protestants were represented by the German Evangelical Church, Protestantism in Germany was still less centralized than Catholicism. There were sects within the religion that represented different beliefs than the German Evangelical Church. This diffused the extent of Protestantism's organizational influence. While there was some conflict over the issue of youth between Protestants and the state, it was not on a

widespread organizational level like the conflict with the Catholic Church.[16] Thus, the relationship with Protestantism over youth was not an institutionalized power struggle for influence in the same way the conflict with the Catholic Church was. Within the inherent power struggle between religious youth groups and the Nazis, the Catholic Church rose as the most prominent and centralized threat in Germany. It was the Catholic Church that was uneasily incorporated into the Nazi milieu, and it was therefore the Church that harbored the greatest threat to the Nazis' fulfillment of a new generation and national community. Consequently, it is the Catholic Church and its conflict with Nazi Germany over youth that is the focus of this argument.

In contrast to Italy, the Catholic Church in Germany was more regional.[17] However, despite its minority status, the Church was influential and well organized. Of the forty-million Protestants in the country there were only sixteen-thousand pastors, whereas of the twenty-million Catholics in Germany, there were twenty-thousand priests.[18] Thus, the influence of the Church on the country and its followers was significant. This impact, and the Catholic Church's interest in society, was in response to a history of persecution by the German state in the nineteenth century known as the *Kulturkampf*, or cultural struggle.[19] At the beginning of the 1870s, Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Empire, took measures to limit Catholic political participation and social influence. These included decrees in 1871 and 1872 that limited the right of clergymen to comment in public assemblies and weakened clerical influence in schools.[20] The Church survived these policies and resolved to increase its social influence and thus protect the rights of Catholics.[21] The ability of the Church to endure through a tense political situation and continue to influence German society signaled a history of resilience by the Catholic Church in Germany.

The Church also influenced each country through participation in politics. The place of the Catholic Church in politics prior to the rise of the fascist states was important to the eventual relationship between Church and state under fascism. This was because the relationship in both states during the fascist period was conditioned around the political participation of Catholicism, specifically regarding lay organizations, which included youth groups. The historical context of this tension was derived from the pre-fascist years when largely successful and influential Catholic political parties developed in both Italy and Germany.

In Italy, the Italian Popular Party (*Partido Popolare Italiano*) was prominent in the country and it eventually became the second largest political party in the nation, after the Italian Socialist Party.[22] The electoral base of the Party came largely from Catholic associations, with the social class of their supporters being middle class bourgeoisie. The social class of the Popular Party's base made it a significant competitor against the Italian Fascists as they applied to earn the favor of the same group of voters.[23] The competition between the two entities made the Fascist Party wary of the Catholic associations that gave the Party its strength. Suspicion of Catholic lay activity, including youth groups, became evident in subsequent conflicts over youth between the Church and the Fascist Party during Mussolini's rule.

In Germany, the Centre Party was the Catholic political party of prominence.[24] It was committed to protecting Catholic interests in the country and derived its power largely from the loyalty of a strong Catholic base.[25] The Centre Party had a diverse platform, including both a left-liberal and right-nationalist wing. However, it was largely a party with a center based ideology.[26] Moreover, the Centre Party was a cornerstone of the political structure of the Weimar Republic and an important force in politically stabilizing the state.[27] It was part of every Weimar government, even after being overtaken in 1912 by the Social Democratic Party as the largest

party in the German parliament, or *Reichstag*.[28] This prominence of the Centre Party in German politics made Catholicism a powerful force in Germany.[29] However, the rise of the Nazi Party destabilized the Weimar Republic. The relationship between the Centre Party and the Nazis was one of hostility. The Centre saw the Nazis as irrational and violent while the Nazis believed the Centre Party to be an example of the problems of the Weimar Republic.[30] This conflict bred tension and suspicion between the two parties. Therefore, in Germany, as in Italy, the historic power and influence of Catholic political participation laid the fodder for distrust and conflict between Church and state under fascist rule.

The political participation of the Catholic Church in Italy and Germany also revolved around the shaping of youth. The recognition of youth as a distinct group developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and came into its own after World War I.[31] Youth movements prior to and after World War I wanted to revolutionize society and create a new era. These youth believed themselves to be new men compared to their predecessors' generation.[32] In Germany, the youth movement was more developed than in Italy and found expression through multiple confessional youth groups such as Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups, as well as secular groups such as the naturalist group, the Birds of Passage (*Wandervögel*).[33] Indeed, Germany had the greatest amount of autonomous youth associations of any country in the world.[34] However, after World War I youth groups became politicized as political parties recognized their usefulness and created youth groups of their own.[35] For example, the Centre Party was seen as the political home of Catholic youth groups despite Catholic youth themselves not being political.[36] The ramifications of Catholic political involvement with youth set the groundwork for later Church-state conflict.

Moreover, in Italy, there was widespread discontentment with the old world and a desire for a revolt of the young against the past of their forefathers.[37] The idea of youth as a distinct group had been popular in Italy since its unification into one state.[38] However, the movement of the young in Italy had more of a political basis and was less of a widespread group movement than in Germany. In Italy, the young developed into an anti-liberal, anti-socialist generation prior to World War I and expressed themselves through groups such as the Futurists and Nationalist *Riviste Fiorentine* journalists.[39] Consequently, by the period of fascist rule in both Italy and Germany, there was a recognition of youth as a valuable, separate part of society that both the Catholic Church and the state was able to take advantage of.

The fascist states of Italy and Germany came into power with different yet similar social conditions surrounding them. The tenets of fascism attempted to make sense of these social conditions and craft them into a workable ideology. However, the Catholic Church also had its own ideological goals. The tension between these two ideologies was fundamental to the conflict over youth during fascist rule. For both fascist regimes the community reigned supreme over the individual.[40] For example, for the Nazis the goal of their regime was to shape individuals into the bearers of a new community. In this way, the community usurped the individual.[41] The surrender of the individual to national interest was also seen in Italy. In a 1925 speech, Giovanni Gentile, a fascist philosopher, spoke regarding the idea that Italian Fascism brought the public and private self into one.[42] There was no individual self that was not tied to the national interest.

The importance of community building to both the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis was expressed through the ideal of the new man. There are many ways in which to interpret the new man ideal, but the approach most relevant to this argument is the concept first provided by historians such as George L. Mosse in the mid to late twentieth century. Mosse developed the

idea of fascism as a cultural movement.[43] Specifically, Mosse argues that fascism was a revolt against the liberal culture that pervaded Europe at the time. Mosse also argues that fascism was a movement of youth and that youth were to provide fodder for the creation of a new man, and thus a new generation, that was not scarred and diminished by the past.[44] This new generation was to establish a movement toward something new, or rather, a new society.[45] Historian Jorge Dagnino, in his article "The Myth of the New Man in Italian Fascist Ideology," writes specifically of the Italian new man ideal when he says that the new man was one that sacrificed the self to the collective and was a different type of human being for the new age to come.[46] Thus, the new man ideal was a tool for the fascist states to implement their vision. Nazi Party insider Hermann Rauschning writes of Hitler's beliefs on the ideal of the new man in the following quote ascribed to Hitler, "In my great educative work...I am beginning with the young. We older ones are used up...But my magnificent youngsters! Are there finer ones anywhere in the world?...With them I can make a new world."[47] For the Nazi leader, youth became a rallying point due to the potential for a new society they represented. This new society was to be one of a national community rather than the liberalized and ineffective ideal of the individual. For both states influence over youth was a way to fulfill this goal.

However, the fulfillment of the ideal of a new national community was not without its obstacles. While fascism wanted to create a new society, the Catholic Church had its own view of the future. Catholicism also idealized the idea of community. A Catholic was a Catholic inside and out in the same way that fascism was meant to pervade the individual.[48] While the goals of the Church were not as revolutionary as those of the fascists in that they did not want to create a completely new society, the aims of the Church did directly conflict with those of the regimes. According to historian Emma Fattorini in her book *Hitler, Mussolini, and the Vatican: Pope Pius*

XI and the Speech that Was Never Made, "...fascism sought to employ Catholic universalism to strengthen its nationalism, while the Church hoped to use the authoritarianism of the regime to erect a Catholic state."[49] Thus, the Church desired to implant its influence in states and was specifically interested in Italy due to its social legacy in the country. The Church saw a more authoritative state, such as a fascist one, as a positive ally in its goal to create Catholic states and re-Christianize society. An authoritative state already had the hallmarks of a force that had the potential to help Catholicism penetrate society, however, the Church never desired to be subordinate to such a force.[50] Therefore, the Church was interested in sustaining power and using it to advance its worldview and this placed it in competition with fascism over the fulfillment of ideological goals.

While both the fascist states and the Church had objectives they wanted to fulfill, they needed a vessel in which to do so. For both entities youth was that vessel, a condition which laid the groundwork for dispute. For the fascists, youth were essential to the longevity and viability of the fascist message and the development of a fascist future. Education of youth allowed the states to develop a sense of uniformity in their populace, a condition that facilitated the creation of the new generation that was needed to remake society.[51] In both Italy and Germany the fascist parties, prior to taking power, had recognized the potential of youth and established their own youth groups within their movements. In Germany, the first Nazi youth group was established in 1922 and called the Youth League of the NSDAP (*Jugendbund der NSDAP*). It was a way for the Party to lay claim to youth who were too young to be full-fledged members of the Nazi Party and at the same time instill in them a recognition of their importance in bringing about the new era the movement promised.[52] In Italy, disillusioned university youth were a strength of the Fascist movement. Fascist groups like the Fascist University Groups (*Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*) and

Fascist Youth Avant-garde (*Avanguardie Giovanili Fasciste*) were dependent on the Fascist Party.[53] When both movements came to power in their respective states (Mussolini became prime minister in 1922 and Hitler was named Reich Chancellor in 1933) their youth groups morphed into ones of national scope.[54] Germany had the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*) for boys and the League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*) for young women.[55] Similarly, Italy had the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB) which was comprised of both boys and girls groups.[56]

While young men and women were essential to the fulfillment of a new generation, they each had different roles to play in doing so. Girls were taught the basics of first aid, childcare, and housework. As mothers-to-be, they were essential to the future of both nations. Their education in childcare and household duties became necessary to ensure they would raise children that would carry on the ideals of the regime and thus maintain a new generation. On the other hand, boys' groups were focused on physicality in sports and the military. They were the bearers of a militaristic dynamism that would work to secure a new society.[57] Thus, the ways in which the regimes sought to cultivate a new generation was differentiated by gender. These differences in education were hallmarks of the place each gender was to play in the fulfillment of the new society. Nonetheless, capturing the consciences of youth in general was important to both fascist states. Recognizing the potential of youth, the fascist parties, prior to and during their reign, sought to control youth and thus realize their ideals.

Additionally, the Catholic Church's desire for influence over youth sprang from the same inclination for control that was part of fascist ideology. The Church desired to influence both boys and girls and thus develop strong Catholic citizens. However, the hierarchy of the Church was specifically interested in young women as they felt that modern society affected them in ways more overtly impactful than it did young men.[58] Nevertheless, for the Church, like the

fascists, youth education was a way to form the next generation of Catholics and thus ensure the future of the Church's teachings.[59] This desire for control was seen in the international umbrella organization for Catholic lay activity, including youth groups, called Catholic Action (*Azione Cattolica*). It was created by Pius X in 1905 as a framework for Catholic lay activity.[60] This framework was most powerful in Italy, where it was first established. However, it also had branches internationally, including one in Germany.[61] After reforms in 1923, Catholic Action became more dependent on Church hierarchy, with a national director appointed by the Pope.[62] This marked its importance to the Church's future vision. However, the Catholic Action model was not as popular in Germany as in its place of birth, although it still existed. Instead, German Catholic youth groups were largely nationwide in scope and independent of Vatican control.[63] While Catholic youth were unified under the umbrella organization Catholic Youth of Germany in 1928, they were still less centralized than the youth groups of Italy that were dependent on the Catholic Action model. Catholic Youth of Germany was comprised of more than twenty leagues, congregations, and associations of different sizes across Germany.[64] These leagues included the Youth Federation of New Germany (*Jugendbund Neudeutschland*) and the Stormtroopers (*Sturmschar*). The largest of the German Catholic youth groups was the Catholic Young Men's Association (*Jungmannerverband*, JMV).[65] This group was essential to the Nazi conflict with the Church over youth and the consequent repression of Catholic youth groups. German Catholic youth and the organization of Catholic Action embodied the Church's international push to influence Catholic citizens of many countries. The Church saw youth education as essential to its future, specifically as a means to facilitate the re-Christianization of society, and thus the Church's penetration into the social fabric of the European states.[66]

The conflict over youth organizations between the fascist states and the Catholic Church became evident during and after the signing of the Lateran Treaties with Italy in 1929 and the Reich Concordat with Germany in 1933. The process of negotiating these treaties, and the tense atmosphere of the years after these agreements up until wartime, illustrated the Church's deep interest in youth education and resilient desire to preserve its worldview and rights in competition with the fascist states. However, while the conflicts mirrored each other in their basic structure, the cultural and social conditions of both countries made the progression and results of the conflict distinct to each state. The place of the Catholic Church was different in Germany than it was in Italy during the period of fascist rule. In Germany, the Church, while influential, was not an essential part of German society. The Nazis ultimately saw Christianity, including the Catholic Church, as something that would be superseded by Nazi ideology.[67] In Italy, the Church was ingrained in the state, and this was made blatant when it became the country's state religion. This influence was also seen in the power retained by Catholic Action in the country following the Lateran Treaties. With the Catholic Church in Germany a minority and not influential across German society, Hitler and the Nazis were able to craft a stronger policy against the Church than that which appeared in Italy. Thus, the struggle in Germany between Church and state resulted in greater direct coercive policies than the conflict present in Italy. Nevertheless, in both states, the response of the Church to the issue of youth education revealed a significant struggle between Church and state.

During the early days of the Fascist regime in Italy, Fascist youth competed with other ideological youth groups such as those of the Catholics, liberals, and nationalists. In order to fulfill its goal to create a new Fascist generation, Mussolini's regime recognized the need for a monopoly over of youth in Italy. This began when the Italian Parliament approved the

establishment of the Fascist mass youth organization, the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, on April 3, 1926.[68] The establishment of the ONB signified the movement of the Fascist regime into a controlling and absolutist state and thus created conflict with Catholic youth groups. This conflict was a power struggle based in ideology as the monopolistic aims of the ONB threatened the existence and influence of Catholic youth groups. In particular the organizational plan of the ONB prohibited any other organization from educating the youth of Italy spiritually, physically, or morally.[69]

The progress of the state toward a monopoly over youth came at the same time that Mussolini, in August 1926, began negotiations with the Catholic Church to answer the Roman Question.[70] A factor that also impacted the negotiation process was the waves of street violence between Fascist and Catholic youth during the summer and fall of 1926. The violence was a result of revolutionary factions within the Fascist Party that desired to push Mussolini to enact their vision. Because many revolutionaries held anti-Catholic views, Church institutions were targets. A flashpoint of this violence was on October 31, 1926 when, after an attempt on the life of Mussolini, Fascist groups attacked Catholic institutions and youth groups.[71] Disorder, initiated through violent action, hampered the negotiation process of the Lateran Treaties and went on to disrupt Church-state relations on multiple occasions. However, it was not solely revolutionaries who obstructed the negotiation process. Mussolini also played a role when he threatened to suppress all youth groups under Catholic Action twice during the period of negotiations.[72]

While the revolutionaries' violence may not have been directed by Mussolini himself, it served him in the negotiation process because it forced the Vatican to seek assistance from Mussolini.[73] Ultimately, the violence and intimidation demonstrated the state's ability to threaten the autonomy of Church organizations and therefore allowed Mussolini to keep the negotiations

on a path that pleased his aims. The revelation of the Church's precarious hold over the Italian population made clear to Pope Pius XI the need to protect Catholic youth and lay organizations through an agreement between Church and state.[74] However, the Vatican did not desire to capitulate on the topic of its lay organizations, especially its influence over youth. Pope Pius XI was a strong proponent of Catholic Action, and on December 20, 1926, in a public formal meeting of the Cardinals at the Vatican, he spoke out against Mussolini's threats to Catholic Action and the controlling and monopolistic concept of the Fascist state. This issue was of such importance to the Pope that he even went so far as to insinuate that the Lateran Treaties were not as important as protecting Catholic youth.[75]

Nevertheless, despite this conflict, an agreement was negotiated between the two powers. The importance of the moment for both Mussolini's regime and the Church, in regard to recognition and legal protection, meant that negotiations sustained despite the tension of the moment. Thus, on February 11, 1929 the Lateran Treaties were signed between Fascist Italy and the Catholic Church. As a result, the seventy-year break between the Church and Italy ended. Additionally, the agreement resulted in gains to both sides. Mussolini's state received the Church's official recognition, while Catholicism became the state religion.[76] However, this did not mean that the issue of youth dissolved or that the relationship between Fascist Italy and the Catholic Church became completely harmonious. In fact, while the Lateran Treaties did endow Mussolini's government with the recognition of the Church, it also enshrined the Church's ability to influence Italian youth. Article 43 of the Lateran Treaties' Concordat of 1929 recognized the right of Catholic lay organizations, including Catholic Action, to activities of a religious nature under the direction of Church hierarchy as long as they were nonpolitical.[77] While this limited Catholic lay activity, it also constructed a future where the Church's public

and social influence was enshrined by the state.[78] Through the Lateran Treaties, Catholic Action became the only autonomous organization in Italy that was not Fascist in nature. In fact, Catholic Action was such a hub of Catholic social influence that it became the political mouthpiece of the Church during the Fascist regime.[79] Therefore, the Church's resilience in Italy about its lay activity developed a reality that saw the Church retain key aspects of its power and influence over youth.

The rise of fascism to power in Germany began when the Nazi movement's leader, Adolf Hitler, was named Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933.[80] It ended with the passage of the Enabling Act on March 23, 1933, which gave Hitler the capacity to rule by decree, essentially suppressing all the political power of the *Reichstag*.[81] The hostility that had been bred between the Nazi Party and the Centre Party made the Centre a threat to the successful enactment of the Enabling Act. However, the Centre Party's main concern was in protecting the rights of the Church, specifically that of youth education. This reflected the Vatican's intense interest in protecting the Church's traditional rights and areas of power. Thus, the lure of an agreement, similar to Italy's 1929 Lateran Treaties, that would provide legal protection to the Church made the Centre Party willing to cooperate.[82] Despite a history of suspicion of the Nazi Party, the Centre Party was persuaded by Hitler that the Enabling Act would not threaten Church rights. This, coupled with pressure from the Vatican, led the Centre Party to vote in favor of the Enabling Act.[83] Thus, the Church saw compromising with the Nazi leader as an option that would allow the institution to stay resilient against Nazi aggression and retain its traditional rights of influence.

In some ways to adhere to his promise to protect Church rights and in the best interest of his burgeoning regime, Hitler decided to act with civility toward the Church. His policy was one

of indirect, rather than blatant, coercion. This decision was influenced by the Church's strong international presence that made it politically dangerous to show aggression towards the institution.[84] Hitler's policies were also influenced by the importance of the Saar vote. After World War I, the area of the Saarland was governed by the League of Nations and its coal mines were given to France. However, the Treaty of Versailles stipulated that after fifteen years the Saarland was allowed to vote on whether the area would be sovereign to France or Germany. The securement of this area for Germany, and specifically control of its coal mines, was essential to Hitler.[85] However, the area of the Saar was seventy percent Catholic, so a policy that was not overtly coercive to the Church was necessary.[86] This choice of an amicable relationship with the institution resulted in the start of negotiations for an agreement between Church and state like that between Mussolini's regime and the Vatican in 1929.

Similar to Italy, the time of negotiations for an agreement in Germany was coupled with conflict and mistrust between the Church and the fascist party in power. One of these conflicts came in the form of the dual loyalties expressed by German Catholics. Unlike in Italy, their religion was not synonymous with their homeland. This meant that there was a constant battle among many about of whether they were more Catholic or German. This conflict was recognized by the Nazis and resulted in the shaming of many in Catholic youth groups by Nazi youth for not becoming good citizens of the Fatherland and instead favoring their religion too heavily.[87] Furthermore, Hitler's regime applied pressure to Catholic youth through propaganda. This was combined with reduced financial aid to Catholic associations as well as pressure on teachers and employers who showed preference to Catholic youth. Tactics such as these harmed the chances of Catholic youth members for future prosperity within the state.[88] The regime also specifically targeted the Church's political voice.[89] The Centre Party's identity as a mainstay in the political

structure of the Weimar Republic was a threat to the Nazi Party. Consequently, Hitler greatly desired the promise of the exclusion of Catholic priests from political action in any agreement between Germany and the Vatican.[90] But the Nazi leader did not wait until negotiations had ended before he began to arrest priests active in the Centre Party, and its Bavarian branch, the Bavarian People's Party, on June 20 through the 23, 1933.[91]

Nevertheless, despite these realities, negotiations for a Concordat continued. The signing of an agreement was important to both parties. For Hitler, it meant the legitimization of his government in foreign eyes and the enshrinement of his power through the elimination of a political threat from German Catholics. For the Vatican, it meant the protection of its schools and lay organizations from Nazi control. The negotiations of the Reich Concordat were conducted by Germany’s Vice Chancellor Franz Von Papen and the Vatican’s Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, with Pope Pius XI keeping a close eye on the proceedings.[92] However, with the Church in Germany more independent of central authority than it was in Italy, regional voices were important, although not sought during negotiation.[93] On May 30, 1933, German bishops met to discuss a possible Concordat at the Fulda Conference. What came out of this conference was the Fulda Pastoral, which outlined the opinions of the bishops regarding what should be made clear in any agreement between Church and state. The bishops demanded freedom for the Church to continue its youth organizations and confessional schools as well as the protection of its property. However, they also recognized their faithfulness to the state, by expressing their demands not in any sentiment against the state, but rather based on their unique Catholic identity.[94] Thus, the demands of the bishops closely aligned to the priorities of the Vatican, those being interest in protecting the Church’s traditional power to shape a Catholic worldview in its young followers through an agreement between Church and state.

Regardless of Catholic hesitancies, the Reich Concordat was signed on July 20, 1933 and became final on September 10 of that same year.[95] Like in Italy, the conflict over youth between the Church and the Nazis also centered around a specific part of the agreement. Article 31 of the Reich Concordat addressed the issue of Catholic lay activity, which included Catholic youth groups. The article limited Catholic lay activity to that which was exclusively religious. This erased, for Hitler, the potential of Catholic political competition. Additionally, Catholic youth were promised the ability to perform their Church duties while not being coerced to do anything irreconcilable with their religious beliefs.[96] However, unlike Article 43 of Concordat of 1929, Article 31 of the Reich Concordat was not clear in what it protected. There was no exact consensus about which groups were safeguarded and thus the agreement carried less weight. This meant that the Church's desire in signing this agreement went unfulfilled. The Church lacked a clearly defined ability to protect its traditional areas of influence and defend itself against Nazi aggression.[97]

Despite the signing of agreements between Church and state in Italy and Germany, underlying complexities in each state further complicated the conflict over youth. The continued power of Catholic Action in Italy and the weaknesses of the Reich Concordat in Germany meant that conflict over the issue of youth continued after the signing of the Lateran Treaties and the Reich Concordat.

Article 43 of the Concordat of 1929 enshrined Catholic Action and Catholic lay activity's social and political influence, albeit restricting it to a nonpolitical role. Recognizing this, Mussolini wanted to weaken Article 43.[98] A series of events during 1930 advanced the notion that Catholic lay activity was a threat to the regime. After the signing of the Lateran Treaties, there was a rise in Catholic lay activity and heightened activism by Catholics. This was coupled

with increased militancy among Catholic university students, the discovery of the anti-Fascist organization National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*), as well as resistance by clergy and local leaders to Catholic youth belonging to the ONB.[99] These events worked together to portray Catholic lay activity as a threat and were a prelude to conflict in 1931.

In the Spring of 1931, Catholic Action planned to expand its activities by organizing Catholic university students. This was the perfect opportunity for Mussolini to act against the threat of Catholic Action. Through the use of propaganda Mussolini disparaged the organization, specifically connecting it to the now defunct Italian Popular Party. This portrayed Catholic Action as a political threat to the Fascist regime. In early April 1933, Mussolini banned the Catholic University Federation in Ferrara and Pavia and investigated Catholic youth activity. Ultimately, Mussolini demanded that Pope Pius XI acknowledge the nonpolitical nature of Catholic Action.[100] During this time, violence was also visited upon Catholic clubs and their members.[101] Young University Fascists took part in street violence against Catholic youth. On May 27, 1931, Fascist youth invaded and ransacked Catholic clubs and infiltrated the headquarters of Catholic organizations. The conflict came to a head when, on May 29, Mussolini ordered the disbandment of all Catholic youth organizations.[102] Through these actions, Mussolini desired to make it clear to Pope Pius XI that Catholic Action and lay activity should not infiltrate society in a way that threatened the Fascist regime.[103]

However, Pius XI had a strong reaction to Fascist violence. On June 29, 1931 the Pope wrote *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, an encyclical that denounced Fascist violence and the state's desire for a monopoly over youth. Pius XI wrote that, "a conception of the State, which makes the young generations belong entirely to it without any exception from the tenderest years up to adult life, cannot be reconciled by a Catholic with the Catholic doctrine; nor can it be reconciled

with the natural right of the family."[104] The Pope's response did not capitulate to Mussolini's desire to repress Catholic social influence. Instead, the Pope wanted Mussolini to know the Church's strong stance over the issue of youth and lay activity. He wanted to make clear that the Church would not end its attempts to shape a Catholic worldview in its followers. Nevertheless, the Pope's response did not condemn the Fascist Party itself. Rather, it focused on the Party's monopolistic tendencies and a desire for the recognition of Church rights.[105] The strength of the Church's hold on Catholic youth and Mussolini's desire to weaken other influences on society was essential to the conflict in 1931. Both sides had a vested interest in the outcome of this conflict as it sought to determine who held the power to shape youth in the state.

Nevertheless, by the end of July 1931 the Vatican desired to end the conflict. Widespread disorder, before and after the Pope's encyclical in June 1931, had strained the Church-state relationship to a breaking point. A few bishops and priests publicly protested the regime and Catholics took part in a war of words through slogans and the handing out of leaflets.[106] The Pope had stood strong on the issue of Catholic lay activity; however, he knew that a majority of the Cardinals of the Church did not desire a complete break with Italy. He also felt it necessary to remain in a relationship with the regime to protect the Church's interests in the state.[107] Mussolini, too, wanted an end to the discord as it had become a threat to the stability of his regime. The waves of violence by Fascist youth threatened the authority of the prefects of the Fascist Party and demonstrated the weakness of the state in keeping Fascist youth in line with party goals.[108] Thus, on September 2, 1931 an agreement was signed to end the conflict. The agreement presented Mussolini with some positive results. It banned former Italian Popular Party members from Catholic Action. Moreover, a new structure for Catholic Action was instituted that made the organization more localized and thereby weakened its national influence.

However, Catholic Action was not irrevocably weakened by this agreement. Rather, it was able to exert more influence on the state by welcoming localized organizational activity.[109] Additionally, Catholic Action's right to organize was reinstated. After this conflict, there was never another attempt to dissolve Catholic lay activity.[110] Thus, the reconciliation of the Fascist state and the Vatican allowed for the continuation of the Church's efforts at re-Christianization by reinstating the Catholic influence on Italian society and allowing the Vatican's efforts to transform Italy into an ideal Catholic state to continue.[111]

Despite this conflict, there is debate about the significance of Catholic resistance in 1931. Historian David I. Kertzer, in his book *The Pope and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe*, argues that the 1931 conflict over Catholic Action was not a "papal struggle against Fascism." Rather, to Kertzer, the Pope needed Fascist Italy as an ally for Catholic Action to succeed.[112] Kertzer is correct in his assessment that the relationship between Fascist Italy and the Catholic Church was mutually beneficial. The Lateran Treaties had positive aspects for both parties. Mussolini's state gained the recognition of the Church and the Church's place in society became sanctioned by the state.[113] However, the relationship was more complex than the simple cooperative arrangement Kertzer implies. The securing of independence for Catholic Action allowed Pope Pius XI to use the state to his advantage. For example, the Church battled against immorality by pushing the Italian police to work against female immodesty, such as women baring their skin on beaches.[114] However, Pius XI's focus on female immodesty is important when one considers that the Church hierarchy was specifically interested in influencing female youth due to the ways in which modern society singularly affected them and their sense of morality.[115] Thus, while the Church allied with the Fascist regime in its push to fight female immodesty the reasoning for the Vatican's interest in female youth tied back to the

institution's desire to impart a Catholic worldview on Italian citizens. It is true that the Church saw an authoritarian ally as a way to further its influence on society, however, they were not to be subordinate to that ally.[116] While Pope Pius XI found it reasonable to work with Mussolini to combat female immorality and thus influence feminine modesty, the regime's efforts to limit the Church's lay activity in 1931 were unacceptable. This is seen in Pius XI's direct response to the conflict in the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* and his criticism of the state's desire for a monopoly over youth to the detriment of the Church.[117] Thus, while the Church did work with and see benefits in a relationship with Fascist Italy, the 1931 conflict signified that the Church was capable of fighting to preserve its right to influence its followers and thus, in this way, it fought against Fascism in Italy.

In Germany, the instability of the Reich Concordat led to direct conflict over youth just days after the agreement was signed. On July 29, 1933 Baldur von Schirach, the head of the Hitler Youth, forbade Hitler Youth members from also being members of confessional youth organizations. This decision put Catholic youth members at a disadvantage as being a member of the Hitler Youth was essential to successfully securing future employment.[118] However, Schirach's decree on double membership was just the beginning of the strain put upon Catholic youth groups after the signing of the Reich Concordat. Unlike in Italy, due to the minority status of the Catholic Church in Germany, the Nazis were able to craft a more coercive policy against the institution and thus greater oppose the Church's aims. Nevertheless, as seen with the issue of the Saarland, the state still had to mold its policies based on national and international conditions. In order to accommodate these compounding factors, the Nazis attempted to wrest control from the Church through a campaign for the ideological minds of German youth, rather than a direct attack on the Vatican itself.[119]

The opinion of the Nazi intelligence agency, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), was that Catholic groups should be limited to religious instruction only, with no influence on politics and this belief was reinforced by the Reich Concordat. The SD therefore moved against specific priests known to oppose the regime or have political ambitions.[120] This focus on political threats was followed by a more blatant attack on Catholic lay activity when, in September 1933, the Bavarian state police prohibited all youth groups, except those that were religious in nature. Despite the protection of religious groups within this decree, the decision still threatened the existence of Catholic youth groups in the area. This was because the prohibition, like Article 31 of the Reich Concordat, was unclear in which groups were protected due to their religious nature. In this way, the decree could be molded to justify action against Catholic youth groups.[121] This thereby highlighted the instability of the Reich Concordat's stipulations regarding Catholic youth and thus the Church's the ability to defend itself against threatening Nazi policies. Tensions between Church and state increased to such a degree that it became necessary to outline the meaning of Article 31 in reference to Catholic youth groups. On October 10, 1933 representatives of the Hitler Youth and Catholic youth met to discuss Article 31. What came from this meeting was not an agreement, but a hope by the Church that the state would protect the rights of its youth groups.[122] However, as these talks went on without a resolution, Nazi aggression and Catholic resistance both increased.

The first sign that the Nazis would strongly increase pressure on Catholic youth came on December 19, 1933, when Ludwig Müller, the primate of the German Evangelical Church (which included a majority of German Protestants) made a deal with the Hitler Youth. This agreement stipulated that youth could only remain members of the Evangelical Youth of Germany (*Evangelische Jugend Deutschlands*) if they were also members of the Hitler Youth.

Thus, through this agreement, all Evangelical youth groups were incorporated into the Hitler Youth.[123] The result of this was that the Catholic Church became the last major holdout to Nazi influence. This gave the state the impetus needed to intensify its pressure on Catholic youth groups.[124]

Nevertheless, Catholic youth leaders wanted a clearer recognition by the state of the Church's right to shape their young. They desired the ability for young Catholics who were members of the Hitler Youth to fulfill their religious obligations. The leaders also believed that Church activities beyond religious instruction like camping and scouting would facilitate a social consciousness in their followers. On Easter 1934, the Vatican supported the beliefs of Catholic youth leaders in Germany through a letter.[125] Pope Pius XI wrote of his recognition of the precarious position of Catholic youth in Germany and extended the Vatican's support to their cause. The Pope's message was read throughout Germany at church services and posted on church doors. The support of the Vatican was inspiring to Catholic youth. This was demonstrated when, a few weeks after the Pope's Easter letter, German youth leaders made a pilgrimage to Rome to pledge the loyalty of all Catholic youth to the Vatican.[126] Additionally, 1934 saw an increase in Catholic mobilization in the face of increasingly aggressive Nazi policies.[127] This rise in mobilization happened specifically through demonstrations in West Germany, the largest of which was in Essen where thirty-thousand men and boys showed up to demonstrate support.[128] Participating in demonstrations during 1933 through 1936 became a common pastime for the average Catholic youth member, with popular Catholic holidays marking the biggest days of demonstration.[129]

After police action that banned the flying of the flags of Church lay organizations except in churches or on church grounds as well as non-traditional processions, resistance by Catholic

lay activity molded to Nazi policies. Instead of direct demonstrations, previously small traditional feasts were celebrated on a large scale. The May 15, 1934 Feast of the Ascension in Aachen brought forty-thousand young pilgrims to the town.[130] Additionally, between June 17 and July 1, 1934, during the 1125th anniversary of the death of the missionary St. Ludger, twenty-thousand Catholic workers, two-thousand clerical workers, and fifty to sixty-thousand Catholic boys arrived in the town of Werden.[131] This response made the SD see Catholic Action and Catholic youth groups without evidence as a "coordinating agency" for youth and worker mobilization. The SD plan to tackle this threat was to dissolve the central office of the JMV and occupational youth organizations. The Church would be allowed to retain organizations based on age and sex, but only those with religious aims. However, the goals of the SD took time to implement, with the Central Office of Catholic Action in Germany not being dissolved until 1938 and the JMV not until 1939. Nevertheless, the intelligence agency realized more state coercion was necessary in order to cease Catholic influence on youth.[132]

A change in policy came after the conclusion of the Saar vote in January 1935. The Nazis no longer needed to worry about negatively affecting Catholic opinion in the area and were free to use the more coercive powers of the state against Catholic citizens. In line with a broader drive to secularize public life, the state campaigned in Munich to enroll students in interdenominational schools. The result of this was a fifty percent decline in Catholic confessional schools by 1938.[133] The police also played a role in coercing members of Catholic youth. They often arrived too late to help in the case of violence perpetrated by the Hitler Youth and arrested Catholic youth members for self-defense.[134] Furthermore, propaganda campaigns in 1935 portrayed Catholic youth as a location of Communist sympathies and repressive actions were undertaken against the JMV, with the offices of the JMV in Dusseldorf being closed by the

secret police.[135] At the beginning of 1936 there was a campaign to enroll every ten-year-old girl and boy in the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, and by April 19 of that year the campaign had come close to completely succeeding in its mission.[136] The final blow to the lifeblood of Catholic youth groups came on December 1, 1936 with the Hitler Youth Law. This law made membership in the Hitler Youth compulsory for all German youth and began a drive by the state against Catholic youth.[137] On July 27, 1937, the state dissolved the JMV within the diocese of Paderborn. On October 27, 1937 the JMV of Münster was dissolved and on February 1, 1938, the JMV in Cologne and Aachen. By 1938, the JMV had only one-tenth of its original membership and on February 6, 1939 the Gestapo, or the Nazi secret police force, dissolved it in its entirety and confiscated its goods.[138] By 1939, after dissolving individual groups throughout Germany, all Catholic youth groups were entirely disbanded.[139]

Consequently, Catholic youth groups in Germany faced coercive Nazi policies that threatened their influence and existence and by the beginning of World War II was completely dissolved at the organizational level. The force with which Catholic youth were disbanded demonstrated to Pope Pius XI that Hitler's Nazi regime was not the ideal partner for a new Catholic state, but rather an authoritative force that would make the Church subservient to its regime. Consequently, the Pope spoke out against Nazism in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in March 1937.[140] The Pope wrote, "What We object to, and what We must object to, is the intentional and systematically fomented opposition which is set up between these educational purposes and those of religion." Pope Pius XI rejected the coercive Nazi policy against Catholicism. Its attempts to keep Catholic youth from practicing and learning their faith were antithetical to the Church's goals.[141] Thus, what the Nazi regime undertook in relation to its

policy with the Catholic Church stood directly against the Church's desire to sustain its traditional power and influence over youth in Germany.

The simple facts of the results of the Nazis' aggressive and coercive policies seem to point to the successful undermining of the Catholic Church's traditional power. However, while the Nazis ultimately dissolved Catholic youth as an organization, its influence remained strong. Catholic youth groups had excellent leadership and the ability to be flexible in the face of opposition.[142] This flexibility allowed Catholics to adapt to Nazi policies. The response of Catholic lay members and youth through the mass attendance at traditional feasts before the Hitler Youth Law of 1936 is an example of this. The meetings were astounding in numbers and exhibited Catholic lay activity adapting to a Nazi policy that forbade non-traditional processions.[143] Furthermore, after the Hitler Youth Law of 1936, the Nazis worked to usurp Church authority by drafting youth into the Labor Service. During this service youth worked away from home for extended periods of time doing agricultural work. This distance created a challenge for youth in sustaining a strong relationship with the Church.[144] To combat these negative consequences to the Catholic milieu, priests attempted to prepare their followers for the anti-religious rhetoric they might receive and worked to keep in touch with their long distance youth.[145] Even after the dissolution of Catholic youth groups, the Church worked within the confines of Nazi law to maintain their influence over youth. Church policy shifted from the now defunct youth group model to a new policy focused on community religious activities.[146] The influence of this policy did not reach all Catholic youth and was limited to a devoted core made mostly of girls and rural youth. Young women and rural youth were more easily influenced as they tended to remain in the home, and thus the community, for greater periods of time than boys or children who lived in more industrialized areas. Nevertheless, the Church's adaptive nature

exemplified its strength and flexibility as well as the ways in which it worked to maintain its traditional power in order to develop a Catholic worldview in youth.[147]

Also important in demonstrating the reality of the Nazis' policy against the Church is an examination of the weaknesses within Catholic youth's main competitor for the minds of young men, the state's own youth group. The focus of the Hitler Youth was on military training. The organization's favoriting of military drills over ideology meant that the Hitler Youth lacked a strong ideological education. This resulted in leaders that could follow orders but had insufficient training to adequately convey ideas.[148] In this way, the political indoctrination within the Hitler Youth was weak.[149] Moreover, the pressure and anti-Catholicism of the organization pushed many Catholics away from the ideals of the group.[150] Thus, Catholic youth made up the largest group of holdouts from the Hitler Youth, and many were not persuaded to join even when it became compulsory after 1936.[151] What added to this was the late implementation of the Hitler Youth Law. While it was announced in 1936, the Hitler Youth knew it was not ready for the kind of coordination needed for mass compulsory involvement.[152] Therefore, it was not until executive orders in March, April, and November 1939 that the order was carried out.[153]

Furthermore, the coming of the war highlighted Nazi weaknesses. As youth leaders were drafted into the war, their organizations were left vulnerable and the same thing happened to Nazi Party leadership.[154] By January 1941, ninety-five percent of those in the highest positions in Nazi youth leadership were at the front, rather than coordinating indoctrination at home.[155] Due to this lack of leadership, the Hitler Youth was nonexistent in some areas of Germany.[156] Moreover, the distractions of war created an opening for Catholic influence, particularly through the actions of priests. The war also weakened the enforcement of Nazi policies and gave Catholic influence room to breathe.[157] Consequently, despite Nazi coercion and the dissolution of Catholic

youth groups, the flexibility of Catholic youth leaders and the weaknesses of the Hitler Youth meant that the Church was still able to play a role in influencing the youth of the regime and thus retain aspects of its traditional power.

In Italy, after 1931, there was never an attempt by the Fascist regime to dissolve Catholic lay activity.[158] However, Catholic Action was under the watchful eye of the state and was closely monitored by Fascist police. The influence of Catholic Action on its members was also used by the regime to direct the political action of Catholics. For example, in 1934, Catholic Action instructed its members to vote for Mussolini's government.[159] As the decade ended, however, tension increased in the relationship between Church and state. During the late 1930s, from the Ethiopian War to the beginning of World War II, the Fascist Party attempted to increase its hold on the populace. Sanctions by the League of Nations that resulted from Italy’s war in Ethiopia meant that Italy faced economic and social hardship. Thus, Mussolini found it necessary to spur a new sense of dynamism in the populace. To do so, he relied on techniques to increase the Fascist Party’s influence on society. The regime expanded its anti-Bolshevik and anti-bourgeois propaganda campaigns, instituted the *passo romano* (goose step), and through new laws increased the Party’s involvement in corporatism, unions, and youth organizations.[160] In October 1937 all youth organization came under the control of the Fascist Party rather than remain under the state Ministry of Education. The Italian Youth of the Lictor (*Gioventu Italiana del Littorio*, GIL) was created, and by February 1939 membership was obligatory.[161] The organization was named after the lictors of Ancient Rome who served the elite and bore the *fasces*, a symbol of authority in their society.[162] The naming of this organization after the lictors, and thus connecting it to a symbol of authority that was now used by the Fascists in Italy, was a further attempt to reinvigorate the Fascist movement. The creation of the organization was also an attempt to give

the Party a greater influence on the indoctrination of youth by having youth organizations under direct control of the Fascist Party.[163]

As Mussolini's tactics became increasingly intrusive, they began to alarm Pope Pius XI. This happened at the same time that Mussolini's fear of the power of Catholic Action grew stronger.[164] Due to the reaches of Mussolini domestically and abroad, attention had been drawn to cracks in the Fascist regime that Catholic lay activity was able to fill. This increased Mussolini's anxiety regarding Catholic institutions. Historian Alexander J. De Grand, in his article, "Cracks in the Facade: The Failure of Fascist Totalitarianism in Italy, 1935-9," sees Italian Fascism as a failed endeavor and the period of 1935 through 1940 as one of crisis for the regime. By this time Mussolini had become increasingly reliant on traditional forces to make his state run and to carry out his foreign and domestic vision. Conservative industrial elites were the basis for Italy's system of corporatism, while his relationship with the Church supplied public support and influence.[165]

What commenced during the last two years of the decade was almost a repeat of the conflict of 1931. During the late 1930s Catholic Action increased its efforts in lay activity. As in previous years, in 1938, the result of this move was an escalation in tension between the regime and the Church and a consequent attempt by the state to control Catholic lay activity. However, this time, Mussolini's state was not as strong as it had been in 1931. The war in Ethiopia and Italy's participation in the Spanish Civil War had led to inflation by 1938. This, coupled with sanctions by the League of Nations, meant that Italy faced an economic crisis.[166] As soldiers returned home from the front they found it difficult to find the jobs they had been promised upon taking up arms.[167] This made 1939 a time of increased labor agitation.[168] Thus, there was a rising feeling of distance between Fascist administrators and the average citizen and people started to

see those administrators as corrupt and self-serving.[169] Italian citizens began to desert Fascist meetings and rip down Fascist badges.[170] Overall, uncertainty about the survival of the regime was a common feeling.[171]

Compounding these problems was the increased activities of Catholic Action, the Catholic University Federation, and the movement of Catholic graduates, whose voices had become a kind of "alternative political class." The strength of the Catholic organizational structure and its consequent influence on the public threatened Mussolini, especially with a weakened state. Thus, in January 1939, as in 1931, Mussolini accused the Vatican of harboring secret aspirations to return to political work through Catholic Action.[172] However, Mussolini' s threats were less successful the second time and the cracks in his regime only expanded.

Once the war began, like in Germany, the regime was faced with the problem of a youth leader shortage when many of the leaders headed to the front lines. What resulted were leaders who were younger and less well trained than those who had come before, which meant imperfections in indoctrination that threatened the regime's ideological stability.[173] Furthermore, during times of wartime stress individuals turned to the Church for guidance instead of the ideology of the state. This resulted in an increase in the importance of the Catholic Church in the eyes of the average citizen.[174] By August 1943, just before the fall of Mussolini, Catholic bishops felt they had enough power to urge Mussolini's government to let the Church directly run the youth organization.[175] Thus, the war demonstrated that the complete control Mussolini desired over his populace was not a reality. The power retained by the Church through the Lateran Treaties, and through Mussolini's dependence on traditional forces, allowed the Church to take advantage of the cracks in the Fascist regime and continue to influence youth in a way that demonstrated the resilience of the Church to Mussolini's Fascist state.

Although Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were two states with different legacies regarding the place of the Catholic Church in society, both states came into conflict with the Church over the issue of youth groups. Youth became a focal point of discord due to their importance in the fulfillment of the fascist states' objective of a new generation for a new society as well as in the Church's desire for a re-Christianized society. The conflict played out differently in both states, with the Church retaining more power in Italian society. Nevertheless, the basis of the conflict, and the desire of the Catholic Church to retain its traditional power over youth, was the same in both states. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany made inroads against Church influence over youth, being more overtly successful in Germany. However, the Church resisted coercion by the state in both countries. Ultimately, it was the insistence of the Church to its influence over Catholic youth that proved a threat to the fulfillment of the fascist vision for society. While the Church in both states had to maneuver within frameworks of influence, ultimately it was able to retain aspects of its traditional power and worldview in both states that demonstrated its resilience to fascist attempts to remake society.

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