

FURTHER VINDICATION OF POPE PIUS XII

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

As we noted on Monday, Holocaust Remembrance Day at the United Nations featured an event, "Remembering the Holocaust: the Documented Efforts of the Catholic Church to Save Lives." A summary of the proceedings has been written by University of Mississippi Professor of Law Ronald Rychlak. He was one of the speakers; he is also a member of the Catholic League's advisory board.

Rychlak's account makes for an important read. To access it, click [here](#).

When the Pope Tried to Kill Hitler

Church of Spies: The Pope's Secret War Against Hitler

by Mark Riebling

Basic Books, New York, 2015

375 pages, \$29.99.

Ronald J. Rychlak

Pope Pius XII and the Nazis: far too many writers have wandered into this fascinating subject without bringing anything new to the table. Many of the late pope's critics have simply repeated information that appeared in already discredited books and articles, but even some supporters have done little more than parrot earlier accounts. Thus, as one

who has read almost all of the books on the topic, I approached Mark Riebling's *Church of Spies* cautiously.

The first chapter seemed promising as it covered the outbreak of World War II and the new pope's first encyclical, *Summi Pontifictus* and its striking condemnation of racism. Unlike many other writers, Riebling acknowledged Pius XII's profound and express statement that there was no room for distinction between Gentiles and Jews in the Catholic Church. That was good, but Riebling also wrote about the perception that Pius was insufficiently outspoken and the problems that created between Catholics and Jews. It looked like the book might go either way, but then Riebling came out with a line that smacks the reader upside the head: "The last day during the war when Pius publicly said the word 'Jew' is also, in fact, the first day history can document his choice to help kill Adolf Hitler." Fasten your seatbelt; you're in for one heck of a ride.

It has long been known that the pope tipped off the Allies about at least one planned coup attempt and certain German troop movements, and other writers have noted that Pius was involved on the periphery with efforts to topple Hitler. Riebling, however, uses documents from German, Italian, Vatican, and other archives to prove that rather than being on the periphery, Pius was deeply involved in the various plots to assassinate Hitler.

The assassination plot began inside the German high command in August 1939. Hitler had already ordered the extermination of those who were mentally or physically defective, he had begun his war against the Jews, and he was just days away from invading Poland. He called together his top generals and admirals to brace them for the invasion, which would be carried out with "merciless severity." The Führer, who saw Catholicism as incompatible with Nazism and particularly hated Pope Pius XII, capped off his talk by saying that he would "snuff out the least flicker of Polish strength by liquidating

thousands of Catholic priests.”

The head of German military intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, had once admired Hitler. A year earlier, however, he became disillusioned when

Hitler began turning ferociously on Germany's own citizens, including some German officers. Although he was a Protestant, extermination of Catholic priests was the final straw. Canaris already had a small circle of like-minded friends. Now they made the fateful decision to depose Hitler, even if they had to kill him.

The logistics of any coup would be complicated enough, but the Canaris group was also concerned about how the Allies would respond. They did not want to see a repeat of the Treaty of Versailles, the harshness of which had assisted Hitler's ascendance to power. They needed to communicate and coordinate with the Allies.

The question was how to make contact with Allied leadership. Canaris determined that the only person with sufficient prestige and freedom to act was the pope. Canaris had known the future pope as a Vatican diplomat in Germany back in the 1920s. He knew about Pius XII's many talents and his utter disdain for Hitler. He just needed someone to help him make contact.

Munich attorney Josef Müller was a war hero and devout Catholic who had represented the Church against the Reich in legal matters. Riebling described him as “part Oskar Schindler, part Vito Corleone.” In 1934, Müller survived a beating and interrogation at the hands of SS Commander Heinrich Himmler, who asked the lawyer about a controversy that had taken place in Bavaria. Without apology, Müller admitted that he had advised the Bavarian prime minister to have Himmler killed. Impressed by his courage, Himmler invited Müller to join the SS. Müller replied: “I am philosophically opposed to you. I am a practicing Catholic, and my brother is

a Catholic priest. Where could I find the possibility of compromise there?" Himmler appreciated this "manly defense," and let the lawyer go. This made Müller somewhat of a legend even among Hitler loyalists.

Riebling introduces Müller in the prologue to *Church of Spies*. He is in leg irons at Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945, hands tied behind his back, and forced to "eat his food like a dog from a plate on the floor." On the next page, he is being led to the gallows. The chapters that follow explain how and why he got there.

In addition to being an attorney, Müller was a pilot, and he often traveled to Rome on business. So, in 1939, when the conspirators tapped him as their messenger, his trips did not draw undue attention. For his first mission, German intelligence gave him a dossier of Nazi atrocities in Poland. He flew to Rome and asked the pontiff's top assistants whether Pius would be willing to contact the British government and ask for support.

Not only did Pius XII agree to assist the conspirators, saying "the German opposition must be heard," he also mobilized Catholic religious orders, especially the Jesuits and Dominicans. These orders did not report to local bishops, who might be susceptible to Nazi pressure, but to leaders of their orders, who reported directly to the pope. The head of the Jesuits in Northern Germany, Augustin Rösch, had been battling the Gestapo since well before World War II, and he became the driving force behind the pope's team in Germany. Rösch linked his group with the military intelligence unit headed by Canaris and worked on planning the coup.

Müller also built a spy network among "army, college, and law-school friends with access to Nazi officials—a community of the well-informed, who worked in newspapers, banks, and even ... the SS itself." His office soon became a clearinghouse of information for the Vatican.

The issue of a political assassination, even of Hitler, raised many questions. Riebling, however, explained that: "Over the centuries, Catholic theologians had developed a nuanced doctrine of tyrannicide, covering virtually every conceivable context." After peaceful means had been exhausted, the assassination of a tyrant could be justified if it would improve conditions in a subjugated nation without sparking a civil war. Unfortunately, Lutheran and Calvinist generals were tied to a Protestant theory of state authority, and they had a much harder time justifying such an action.

Although initially suspicious, British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax and Francis D'Arcy Osborne, British ambassador to the Holy See, were won over by the pope's personal intervention. They would negotiate with "The Decent Germany" if Hitler could be removed. Unfortunately, there were many doubts in high British circles, and the Allies failed to take advantage of much reliable information.

The plotters organized several attempts on Hitler's life, but he had "the luck of the devil," surviving repeated assassination attempts. He canceled speeches without knowing that snipers were in position and ready to take him out. He missed parades where bombs were set to explode. Plotters attempted to kill him by blowing up his plane, but the bomb didn't go off. By shifting a meeting from a concrete bunker to a wooden barracks, Hitler evaded another attempt, memorialized in the movie *Valkyrie*.

Resistance to the Führer at home began to melt away after his military victories in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and France. Outside of Germany, others began to lose patience with the conspirators. Upon becoming prime minister, Winston Churchill put no faith in "decent Germans" taking out Hitler.

German military intelligence eventually learned about Müller's work with the pope and brought him in for questioning. The lawyer was shocked when they asked him to work with them

against Hitler. They gave him a cover story. He was to be a German operative using his contacts with the Vatican to spy on Italians. He would do this by posing as a conspirator seeking out Italians who might rally against Mussolini. "Müller would advance the war effort by pretending to talk peace," explained Riebling. "But he would only be pretending to be pretending." He actually was the anti-Axis plotter that he was pretending to be. Müller, of course, informed the Vatican of what was going on. It dramatically escalated the risk and potential reward of the pope's work with Müller.

At this point, Vatican officials introduced the German lawyer to the concept of *Disciplina Arcani*—the "way of secrecy." Those involved in the Vatican spy ring developed code names. Müller was known as "Herr X," and Pius XII was called "the Chief." Some high security meetings were held in the most secure place possible, excavation sites under Vatican City.

Plotters from Germany's intelligence services asked "the Chief" to keep quiet: "Singling out the Nazis," one later explained, "would have made the German Catholics even more suspected than they were and would have restricted their freedom of action in their work of resistance." Explaining this to a French diplomat, Pius once said: "You know which side my sympathies lie. But I cannot say so."

In 1943, as the SS narrowed its focus, a member of German intelligence finally revealed the names of the conspirators. Müller's dramatic flights across the Alps came to an end, and the Gestapo found his secret files, including the conditions that the plotters had established to kill Hitler, which were printed on Vatican letterhead. This sent Müller into Dachau for the remainder of the war.

When Mussolini was ousted in July 1943, Hitler ordered a division of paratroopers to the borders of St. Peter's Square. "On one side stood German soldiers in black boots and steel helmets, with carbines on their shoulders and Lugers on their

hips. On the other side were the Pope's Swiss Guards, in ruffled tunics and plumed hats, holding medieval pikes in white gloves." Fortunately, Hitler's advisors talked him out of an immediate invasion, though Hitler vowed to finish the job after the war.

Hitler ultimately avoided assassination and died by his own hand, but not before the SS tracked down the resistance. The SS interrogated conspirators, tortured them, and executed or sent them to concentration camps. Some were subjected to show trials before being publicly executed.

Church of Spies reads so well that one is inclined not to reveal what happened to Müller and Rösch (spoiler alert: it's not as bad as the prologue might suggest). In fact, that aspect of *Church of Spies*, involving multiple death sentences, paperwork problems, and well-timed favors, could be a book unto itself.

Church of Spies reads like an adventure novel, but it is documented history. It explains the virtually universal perception of Pius XII during and after the war as a staunch opponent of the Nazis and defender of the Jews. It also reveals Moscow's perception that Pius was anti-Soviet, which certainly could account for the post-war assault on his reputation. It's a great read and an enormously important book.

NEW YORK TIMES SALUTES POPE PIUS XII

Click [here](#) to see the December 17, 2012 Catholic League ad on the op-ed page in the *New York Times*.

Shoddy Scholarship in the Study of Pope Pius XII

Ronald J. Rychlak

This article will appear in the April 2012 issue of Catalyst:

In the December 2011 issue of *Commentary* magazine, Kevin Madigan, the Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard Divinity School, put forth the false charge that the Vatican under Pope Pius XII intentionally helped Nazi war criminals escape justice and make their way to South America after World War II. He based his article on Gerald Steinacher's *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice* and David Cymet's *History vs. Apologetics: The Holocaust, the Third Reich, and the Catholic Church*. The combination of sloppy work and over-the-top charges provides a textbook example of how a verifiably false account can be reported as fact in the mainstream media.

At the heart of the matter are two letters. Bishop Alois Hudal wrote the first letter on May 5, 1949 [click [here](#)], to Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Pope Paul VI) who was then working in the Vatican Secretary of State's office. In that letter, Hudal suggests a pardon for political prisoners who have committed no crimes [*"ancora sono nelle prigioni incarcerate persone senza un delitto o crime fuori di "quello" che nel campo della politica difendevano"*]. Montini's reply, dated May 12 [click [here](#)], says that the Vatican's Secretary of State was already working with several governments toward such an end.

Steinacher incorrectly dated Hudal's letter to April 5, 1949. More seriously, in quoting the letter, he said that Hudal

wanted amnesty for *German soldiers*, and elsewhere on the same page he said that Hudal sought pardon for *war criminals*. Actually, Hudal expressed sympathy for *political prisoners* who had already spent four years in prison, but he never mentioned nationalities, war criminals, or soldiers.

Steinacher also badly distorted Montini's reply. He wrote: "Montini replied that the Holy See would welcome an 'extensive amnesty,' but that the German clergy had a different attitude." In fact, nowhere in Montini's letter was there any mention of the pope, the German clergy, or a difference in their attitudes.

Madigan, who did no original research and did not read Steinacher very carefully, made things even worse. He confounded Steinacher's points and wrote: Steinacher "reports that the pope favored an 'extensive amnesty' for war criminals." That is not what Steinacher wrote, and nothing could be further from the truth.

In August 1944, Pius XII received Winston Churchill in an audience at which the pontiff expressed his understanding of the justice in punishing war criminals. In that year's Christmas message, in a section entitled "War Criminals," Pius wrote that no one "will wish to disarm justice" when it comes to punishing "those who have taken advantage of the war to commit real and proved crimes against the law common to all peoples." He also told a Swiss reporter: "Not only do we approve of the [Nuremburg] trial, but we desire that the guilty be punished as quickly as possible, and without exception." Pius even provided evidence to use against Nazi defendants and assigned a Jesuit to assist the prosecution team.

It has long been known that Hudal and a Croatian priest named Krunoslav Draganović helped some former Nazis escape from Europe. Madigan, however, says that they were part of "a sort of papal mercy program for National Socialists and Fascists."

That is far from the truth.

In his memoir, Hudal explained that the assistance he gave to those fleeing justice was done without the pope's knowledge. He had never agreed with the Vatican's hostility toward the Nazis. His book, *The Foundations of National Socialism*, was critical of the hard line that Vatican diplomats took with the Germans. (He once sarcastically asked whether the Church was being directed by the Allies.) In 1949, when Hudal was criticized in the press, he asked the Vatican to defend him. The reply from Montini was: "there is no defense for a Nazi bishop." That same year, Hudal scheduled a papal audience for a group of Austrian pilgrims. Pius, however, refused to meet with the group as long as Hudal accompanied them. In 1952, Pius demanded that Hudal be removed from his position at Santa Maria dell'Anima, the German national church and college in Rome.

Madigan's alleged "papal mercy program" was the Pontifical Aid Commission (PAC). This organization coordinated efforts to assist victims of war and helped return displaced persons to their homes. As the PAC helped hundreds of thousands of legitimate refugees start life anew, some Nazi war criminals (Madigan says hundreds) took advantage of it to flee justice. Madigan would have us believe that the Church knowingly sent Nazi officials to safety. It is, however, inconceivable that the Nazis revealed their background to reputable Church officials. It is even less likely that any such information would have reached the Vatican. The logistics of the massive relocation programs simply made it impossible to investigate most individuals who sought help.

Monsignor Karl Bayer, who was liaison chaplain responsible for prisoners of war in the north of Italy, explained:

Well, of course we asked questions.... But at the same time, we hadn't an earthly chance of checking on the answers. In Rome, at that time, every kind of paper and information could be

bought. If a man wanted to tell us he was born in Viareggio – no matter if he was really born in Berlin and couldn't speak a word of Italian – he only had to go down into the street and he'd find dozens of Italians willing to swear on a stack of Bibles that they knew he was born in Viareggio – for a hundred lire.

The Church was interested in ending suffering. Some Nazis took advantage of these efforts to help dislocated people. So did some Soviet spies. Would Madigan argue that the Vatican wanted to help them? There is no indication that the Holy See intentionally tried to help Nazis escape justice.

Madigan spreads another false charge from Cymet's book. Often when Jewish parents were deported, they left their children behind with Christian families. The children were still at risk of being uncovered and deported. The surest way to protect them was by indoctrinating them in Christianity. Sometimes over-zealous rescuers would have the children baptized. According to Madigan, Pius refused to let any such child be returned to their Jewish parents. That is nonsense.

In 2004, there was a bit of a dust-up when a document was found that purportedly contained Pope Pius XII's directives that: "Children who have been baptized must not be entrusted to institutions that cannot ensure their Christian education." It also said that children whose families survived the Holocaust should be returned, "as long as they had not been baptized."

It was soon discovered that this controversial document was an incorrect summary of a 1946 letter from the Vatican to the papal nuncio in France. The letter actually said that if institutions (*not families*) wanted to take those children who had been entrusted to the Church, each case had to be examined individually. The Church would breach its obligation to the parents if it turned the children over to the wrong institution. There were very few facilities fit for children

in Palestine or war-torn Europe, and the pope was concerned for their welfare.

These instructions related solely to *institutions* wanting to relocate orphaned children after the war. It did not relate to children being sought by families. The letter said: "things would be different if the children were requested by their relatives." Madigan should have done his homework before spreading these malicious charges.

Commentary magazine printed a letter in which I pointed out several of Madigan's errors, but as is traditional, Madigan was given the last word. In addition to back-tracks and denials, he made a few statements that call for a response. First of all, this is but the most recent in a string of articles that Madigan has written over the past decade highly critical of Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church, and those who disagree with him. He can't keep falling back on the argument that he is only repeating charges made by others.

Madigan complained that I referred to Montini as "one of the pope's top assistants," not as Secretary of State. I did so because Montini worked in the Secretary of State's office, but he never held that office or title.

Madigan references a 1947 declassified report that suggested that a Croatian war criminal (Ante Pavelic) was being protected due to his contacts with the Vatican. The report says: "Pavelic's contacts are so high and his present position so compromising to the Vatican, that any extradition...would deal a staggering blow to the Roman Catholic Church." Madigan snidely adds that the authors of that report "knew better than Mr. Rychlak." I have to disagree.

I have written several articles and a book chapter about the post-war situation in Croatia. In fact, the chapter was translated and published in Croatia in 2008. I have studied the topic thoroughly, and I know that Pavelic was offended by

how *badly* he was treated by Pope Pius XII and Croatian Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac.

In 1947, when the intelligence report was written, the Communist government in Croatia (Yugoslavia) was conducting show trials of Catholic officials (including Stepinac) for collaborating with the Nazis. I had the advantage of writing after Communism fell and the new Croatian parliament apologized for those false charges and the bad information that was spread. Agents writing in 1947 Italy had little reason to know that this information was the creation of Soviet disinformation agents. Madigan, however, wrote after the fall of Communism. He could have looked up this history and educated his readers. Instead, he spread false information.

On the last page of Madigan's article he likened those who defend Pope Pius XII (which would include Pope John Paul II and a slew of reputable historians) to Holocaust deniers. In his reply to my letter, he said that it was not he but Cymet who made this charge. While Cymet did make it, Madigan not only quoted and discussed it at length, he said that Cymet had grounds for making it. This is but one of several issues on which Madigan tried to have it both ways, but careful readers will not let him get away with that.

Finally, Madigan dismisses the post-war Jewish praise for Pius and says it was given to garner good will for the state of Israel. In other words, Jews lied for political reasons. This is an insult not only to Catholics, but to the Jewish leaders who worked so hard to rebuild out of devastation. They were wounded; they had lost most everything, but they did not lose their integrity. They were not lying when they thanked the Catholic Church and praised Pope Pius XII. They knew the truth. Madigan's claims to the contrary are shameful.

Ronald J. Rychlak is a professor of law at the University of Mississippi. He also serves on the Advisory Board of the

Catholic League. His latest book is Hitler, the War, and the Pope, (Revised and Expanded, 2010.)

THE DEFINITIVE WORK ON PIUS XII

Kenneth D. Whitehead
October 2010

***Hitler, the War, and the Pope (Revised and Expanded)* by Ronald J. Rychlak. Our Sunday Visitor, 2010.**

University of Mississippi Professor of Law Ronald J. Rychlak published a book ten years ago with the same title as that shown above.

This new book, just published, is presented ten years later as a “revised and expanded” version of the earlier book, and while it definitely is that, this bare description greatly understates the degree to which this new book now covers virtually every aspect of the Pope Pius XII question, and thus has been transformed into what must now be considered the definitive book on the subject. If you have this book, you have everything you might ever need to defend the record and reputation of the World War II head of the Catholic Church.

The earlier edition was already notable for the taking up and dealing with by means of well-documented facts and carefully thought-out arguments the unjustly criticized pontificate of Pope Pius XII and, in particular, in evaluating the pope’s reactions and behavior in the face of the holocaust against the Jews brought about by Hitler and the Nazis. As most people are aware, within about a half dozen years after the death of Pope Pius XII, questions began to be raised and accusations made about the pope’s behavior during World War

II: the pope was allegedly passive and “silent” in the face of Adolph Hitler’s “final solution” to the “Jewish problem”—which consisted, as nearly everybody also knows, in the well-known Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews. Although nobody has ever explained how merely “speaking out” by anybody could ever possibly have stopped the Nazi juggernaut, Pope Pius XII was nevertheless blamed anyway. His failure to “speak out” in the way that the postwar critics who rose up against him thought he should have spoken out meant that for them he had actively *contributed* to the evil wrought by Hitler and the Nazis; he was somehow held to be complicit in Hitler’s “final solution” and hence himself “guilty.”

Once the pope’s “guilt” was established in the public mind in this fashion, what the late Notre Dame Professor Ralph McInerny aptly called the “defamation” of Pius XII, got going in earnest and ballooned into the veritable anti-Pius “industry” that has lasted down to our own time. Book after book and study after study all supposedly established that the wartime pope had been given to cold diplomacy rather than caring concern; that he was perhaps himself anti-Semitic (or at least indifferent to Jewish suffering); that his hatred of Communism blinded him to the evils of Nazism; that his many years of service in Germany as a papal diplomat had made him uncritically pro-German; that he was only concerned with the security of the Church and of Catholics; that he was unduly fearful of retaliation against any action that might be taken by the Church; and that, in the end, perhaps, he was just simply a moral coward.

All of these allegations and others against the pope have now been carefully identified, dissected, and answered in this book by Professor Ronald Rychlak using citations, argumentation, and documentations which in the end are not just irrefutable but are overwhelming. It turns out that there never was any case against Pope Pius XII, none. As the rabbi who contributes a Foreword to this book remarks, the “case” against Pius XII really consisted all along in “lies, slander, malice, and a desire to thwart justice.” Professor Rychlak documents this in relentless detail. He has delved into virtually all of the allegations or suspicions that have been lodged against the pope; he has examined the evidence for them; and has provided the answers which should be persuasive to any fair-minded person. He appears to have read or consulted practically everything that has ever been written about the Pius XII controversy, pro or con.

More than just showing that Pope Pius XII was not silent and guilty in the face of great evil, however, the author shows rather that, on the contrary, he was really a brave and saintly man for whom a “cause” for canonization is currently pending in the Catholic Church based on voluminous testimonials to the heroic virtue of the man from those who actually knew him and worked with him. Although Pope Pius XII was the head of an officially neutral state in the course of the worldwide fighting going on between the Allies and the Axis powers, and hence did not openly favor an allied victory, he also headed up during that same wartime period the Catholic Church’s extensive efforts throughout the war to help victims, refugees, and displaced persons, including Jews. There is abundant documentation throughout this book that the pope and the Church provided enormous assistance specifically to Jews—contrary to allegations still often made and still unfortunately widely believed. Rychlak cites examples of Jews being helped or hidden not just by monasteries, religious houses, or seminaries; he cites examples where Pope Pius XII personally helped Jews.

The book itself consists of eighteen chapters which cover the situation of the papacy going back into the nineteenth century, as well as chronicling the rise of Nazism and Fascism in Germany and Italy following World War I. Several chapters deal with the pontificate of Pope Pius XI in the 1920s and 1930s in the course of which Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who would be elected pope himself just before the outbreak of the war in 1939, played a vital and significant role. He was, in fact, the architect of many of the policies and action of Pope Pius XI, who, however, never came in for as much criticism as Pius XII did.

The World War II years, as well as the policies, actions, and conduct of Pope Pius XII in the course of them, are covered in a separate chapter for each one of the war years. The pope and his curia did *not* in any way, shape, or form “collaborate” with the Fascists or Nazis, but simply endeavored to survive under what amounted to the very difficult conditions of a wartime occupation by them.

A very important addition to this “revised and expanded” volume is a new chapter entitled “The Play and the KGB Plot,” in which the author goes into the background of the infamous stage play, *The Deputy*, by German playwright Rolf Hochhuth. It was this crude and slanderous play which, in the 1960s, started the ball rolling in the “blame game” against Pius XII. Although Hochhuth claimed that his depiction of the wartime pontiff was based on historical facts, the play was anything but factually based. Rather, it consisted of blatant fabrications which, as Rychlak shows, had originally been concocted and assembled in the Soviet Union in order to discredit the Church. Rolf Hochhuth was either a Communist himself or a dupe. Moreover, the play itself, both in Europe and America, as the author also shows, was produced and largely promoted by known Communists in the theater world of the day.

The defamation of Pius XII, in other words, really *did* start out as a result of a “Communist plot”! Yes, there really was one in this case! The amazing thing is that this myth of a bad pope went so far and lasted so long, considering its true origins. It really has to be considered one of the more successful subversive efforts ever mounted by the Communists.

And the sad fact too, of course, is that this false myth of a silent and guilty and “collaborating” pope has, unfortunately, endured down to our own time in the minds of many people. As is well known, entire books, often well received and touted by today’s elites and the media, have been published bearing titles such as *Hitler’s Pope*, *The Popes Against the Jews*, and *The Silence of Pius XII*.

Professor Rychlak devotes another entire chapter to refuting those he calls “The Critics” of the wartime pope. In this chapter, he very knowledgeably and competently takes on, among others, such anti-Pius authors as John Cornwell, Saul Friedländer, Daniel Joseph Goldhagen, and Susan Zuccotti. It is when he closely examines “the case” mounted against Pius by such authors that he discovers and demonstrates how groundless that case against the pope really turned out to be.

The anti-Pius writers—especially the Catholics among them such as Michael Phayer and Garry Wills, or the ex-Catholics such as James Carroll—really ought to be ashamed of themselves in the light of what the true facts about Pius XII turn out to be. Most of these facts have been there all along. Now that Ronald Rychlak has assembled, organized, and published them, there is no longer any excuse for these critics. One is really hard pressed, in fact, to understand just what the motive had to be for so many to come out blaming and defaming Pius XII in the way that they did. No doubt some people always wanted a convenient scapegoat. It would also seem that the animus of many against Pope Pius XII was really an animus against the Catholic Church. Even then, however, it remains hard to understand how the false myth about him could ever have grown up and persisted the way it has. The appearance of this book ought to herald the end of any further possibility of credibly continuing to maintain the accusations against the wartime pope—but don’t hold your breath!

Of course, other fine writers such as Sister Margherita Marchione, Rabbi David Dalin, William Doyno, Jr., Patrick Gallo, Robert A. Graham, S.J., Ralph McInerny, and Michael O’Carroll, among others, including Ronald Rychlak himself in his 2005 book, *Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII Saved a Half Million Jews from the Nazis*, have all been making the case for a good number of years now against the detractors of Pope Pius XII. Time has been required for all of this material to sink in, but that it will sink in is surely inevitable in the long run since, as the old proverb has it—and as we must hope—“Truth is mighty and shall prevail.” And with this new and definitive edition of *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* by Ronald J. Rychlak we now have between the two covers of one book the evidence that Pope Pius XII, far from being a dupe or a tool of the Nazis, was actually an effective and honorable—and saintly—Vicar of Christ.

The book contains a good Index and Bibliography, as well as photostats of nineteen of the more important key documents. There are also no less than 137 pages of densely packed Notes, which often contain material as interesting and revealing as the main text.

Kenneth D. Whitehead is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League. He has himself written and spoken on the Pius XII question. His 2002 review article, “The Pius XII Controversy,” is posted on the Catholic League’s website, www.catholicleague.org.

Tribute to Pope Pius XII

Sister Margherita Marchione (Catalyst, November 2008)

The career of Eugenio Pacelli ended when people were awakened in Rome soon after dawn, Thursday the 9th of October 1958. Pius XII died at 3:51 a.m., in a plain white iron bed, overhung with a white canopy, in his room on the second floor of the Papal villa in Castelgandolfo, his summer residence.

During the hours he lay in state in Castelgandolfo, mourners filled the main square in front of the building as well as roads leading from the countryside.

The Italian Government ordered three days of national mourning in Rome. Not only were Italian flags at half-staff, but all theatres and amusement places were closed.

A motorcade proceeded along the Appian Way. Pius XII's body was taken first to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Pope's titular church in his capacity as Bishop of Rome. Then it was taken in solemn procession to the Vatican where he laid in state for three days under Michelangelo's gigantic dome in the Basilica of St Peter.

Deep emotion was evident and many shed tears as mourners passed near Pope Pius XII's corpse.

People of all races knelt in prayer. Nine solemn funeral Masses were sung in St Peter's Basilica. On the 13th, the doors were closed at noon to prepare for the funeral ceremonies which began at 4 p.m. Diplomats accredited to the Holy See and representatives from governments around the world were present, as well as his family and Sister Pascalina, who served him for forty years. A final tribute was read and buried with Pius XII: "With his death a great light went out on earth and a new star was lit in heaven."

Fifty years later, in spite of five decades of misinformation and calumny, Catholics throughout the world continue to venerate Pius XII whose efforts during World War II saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust.

Pius XII was not a "silent pope." He explicitly condemned the "wickedness of Hitler" citing Hitler by name, and spoke out about the "fundamental rights of Jews." The wisdom of his words and actions is supported by the evidence. In his testimony at the Adolf Eichmann Nazi War Crime Trials, Jewish scholar Jeno Levai stated: "Pius XII—the one person who did more than anyone else to halt the dreadful crime and alleviate its consequences—is today made the scapegoat for the failures of others."

Pope Pius XII's peace efforts, his denunciation of Nazism and his defense of the Jewish people have been clearly documented. Albert Einstein concluded in Time magazine (December 23, 1940): "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth."

Countless expressions of gratitude, on the part of Jewish chaplains and Holocaust survivors, give witness to the assistance and compassion of the Pope for the Jews before, during and after the Holocaust.

Rabbi David Dalin states that "to deny the legitimacy of their collective gratitude to Pius XII is tantamount to denying their memory and experience of the Holocaust itself, as well as to denying the credibility of their personal testimony and judgment about the Pope's role in rescuing hundreds of thousands of Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazis."

Personally and through his representatives, Pius XII employed all the means at his disposal to save Jews and other refugees during World War II. As a moral leader and a diplomat forced to limit his words, he privately took action and, despite insurmountable obstacles, saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from the gas chambers. Broadcasting in German in April 1943, Vatican Radio protested a long list of Nazi horrors, including "an unprecedented enslavement of human freedom, the deportation of thousands for forced labor, and the killing of innocent and guilty alike."

Throughout World War II, Pius XII so provoked the Nazis that they called him "a mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals." Jewish historian and Holocaust survivor, Michael Tagliacozzo, wrote a letter to the daily newspaper *Davar* (Tel Aviv, April 23, 1985) which states: "Little known is the precious help of the Holy See. On the recommendation of Pius XII the religious of every order did their best to save Jews."

All experts who witnessed that era agree that if Pius XII had stridently attacked the Nazi leaders, more lives would have been lost. Fifty years later, I interviewed Carlo Sestieri, a Jewish survivor, who was hidden in the Vatican. In a letter to me he suggested that "only the Jews who were persecuted understand why the Holy Father could not publicly denounce the Nazi-Fascist government. Without doubt—he stated—it helped avoid worse disasters."

Pius XII's virtuous life speaks for itself. On December 13, 1954, a picture story entitled "Years of a Great Pope," appeared in *Life* magazine. The author states that Pius XII was deserving of the title "Great Pope" because he sought "peace for the world and the spirit" during World War II.

He was truly a "Great Pope," and it is high time everyone gave him his due.

Sister Margherita Marchione is the author of many books and articles on Pope Pius XII. She is one of the world's foremost authorities on the subject.

The Jewish Community Should Rethink its Attitude Toward Pius XII

By Sister Margherita Marchione

(June 1, 2007)

As the Vatican moves toward announcing the beatification of Pope Pius XII, some prominent American Jewish leaders continue to insist that the Church should desist from that long-overdue action. They claim that Pius was guilty of not doing enough to prevent Hitler's genocide of Jews during the Holocaust. Even putting aside the impertinence of people from outside the Catholic faith like Abraham Foxman, executive vice president of the Anti-Defamation League, or Seymour Reich, past chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, presuming to dictate to the Vatican whom the Church can or cannot beatify, the charges they levy against Pius XII are simply untrue. In reality, the wartime pope did far more to save Jews than did other leaders of the day, including people like Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, who, unlike Pius, had enormous military assets at their command. Yet for some incomprehensible reason, it is Pius, the only world leader who made sustained efforts to save Jews during the Holocaust, who is scapegoated for the world's failure to act forthrightly in the face of evil. In an effort to counteract the inaccuracies of some historians, I have gathered documentation that proves how outrageously incorrect are the misrepresentations about Pope Pius XII's so-called

“silence” and “anti-Semitism.” In my book, *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?* (Paulist Press, 2007), I proved that Pius XII was neither silent nor anti-Semitic. Just consider the testimonials of Jewish leaders of his day thanking him for his efforts, and the gratitude the 5000 Jews saved during the Nazi occupation of Rome evince for the Pope. They understood that the Pope had to be prudent while moving behind the scenes to protect as many Jews as he possibly could. Had he taken a more public and provocative stand, he would have infuriated Hitler and invited Nazi retaliation against the Vatican; thereby endangering the lives of thousands of Jews who, at his direction, were hidden in 155 convents and monasteries in Rome alone. In reality, Pius XII was a saintly man, a man of peace and compassion. He condemned strongly the anti-Semitic persecutions, the oppression of invaded lands and the inhuman conduct of the Nazis. He was a champion of peace, freedom, human dignity. He encouraged Catholics to look on Christians and Jews as their brothers and sisters, all children of a common Father. For his part, Pius was totally committed to playing the role of universal pastor, the kind and loving father to all victims, regardless of their religious background. Many people who dedicated themselves to the cause of rescuing Jews during those terrible years paid tribute to the efforts of Pius XII. For example, John W. Phele, executive director of the U.S. War Refugee Board, wrote just after the war ended in 1945; “The Catholic clergy saved and protected many thousands and the Vatican rendered invaluable assistance to the Board and to the persecuted in Nazi hands.” Sir Francis Osborne, a non-Catholic British diplomat in the Vatican from 1936 to 1947, had this to say (The Times of London, May 20, 1963): “...Pius XII was the most warmly, humane, kindly, generous, sympathetic and, incidentally, saintly character that it has been my privilege to meet. ...Without the slightest doubt, he would have been ready and glad to give his life to redeem humanity from its consequences. And this quite irrespective of nationality or Faith.” Consider Pius’ own words during those terrible days. In response to Franklin

Delano Roosevelt's letter of December 31, 1942, the Pope expressed his readiness to collaborate with him to achieve peace and "to do everything in Our power to alleviate the countless sufferings arising from this tragic conflict (January 5, 1943)." President Roosevelt wrote on August 3, 1944, to Myron C. Taylor, his personal representative at the Vatican; "I should like you to take the occasion to express to His Holiness my deeply-felt appreciation of the frequent action which the Holy See has taken on its own initiative in its generous and merciful efforts to render assistance to the victims of racial and religious persecutions." Or consider that on June 25, 1944, Pius XII telegraphed the following protest message to Admiral Horthy, the pro-Nazi ruler of Hungary in which he spoke of the sufferings endured by hundreds of thousands "on account of their national or racial origin by a great number of unfortunate people belonging to this noble and chivalrous nation. ... We appeal to your noble feelings, in the full trust that Your Serene Highness will do everything in your power to save many unfortunate people from further pain and sorrow." In response to the inaccurate and unjust statement by Shmuley Boteach on April 15, 2007, in the online edition of Jerusalem Post, and that of April 17, 2007, by Etgar Lefkovits, I submit the following testimony published in The Palestine Post, (the present Jerusalem Post), April 28, 1944, headlined "A Papal Audience in Wartime." It was signed by a "refugee"; a footnote states that the article's author arrived in Palestine on the ship Nyassa. This article, published by a young German Jew in The Palestine Post, points up Pope Pius XII's appreciation for the "Chosen People." It is significant because it shows the attention and great love with which the Pontiff regarded the Jews. During an audience with the Pope, the young Jew told Pius XII about a group of shipwrecked Jewish refugees, who were then starving in a prisoner of war camp on an island in Greece. The Pope listened carefully and then said to him, "You have done well to come and tell me this. Come back tomorrow with a written report and give it to the (Vatican) Secretary of State who is dealing

with this question....My son, I hope you will always be proud to be a Jew!"... Pius XII lifted his hands to bless him, then stopped, smiled, touched the author's head with his fingers, and lifted him from his kneeling position. Documents show that renowned Jewish contemporaries of Pius XII strongly defended him—among them, Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir: "When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the Pope was raised for the victims." Nor can Albert Einstein's statement (Time Magazine, 1940) be ignored: "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth." Jewish historian Pinchas Lapide tells how Pope Pius XII sent his Papal Nuncio in Berlin to visit Hitler in Berchtesgaden to plead for the Jews. That interview ended when Hitler smashed a glass at the Nuncio's feet. From Hitler's reaction, the Pope was convinced that public pronouncements would have sealed the fate of many more Jews. Indeed, after this incident, Hitler, who often raged against the Pope to his henchmen for protecting Jews, conceived a plot—fortunately never realized—to kidnap Pius XII from the Vatican to Germany. Frankly, I am at a loss to understand why modern Jewish leaders like Foxman and Reich are so ready to disregard the testimony of great predecessors like Golda Meir and Einstein, who went out of their way to praise Pope Pius XII. Whatever the reason, I implore Jews of good will and open minds to take another hard look at the evidence concerning the wartime Pope. If they do, I am convinced that they will come to the same conclusion that I have; that Pius XII is blameless of the charges against him. Indeed, Pius deserves to be acclaimed as a "Righteous Gentile" for his courageous efforts that saved thousands of Jews from certain death, rather than being scorned as a moral failure unworthy of beatification. Margherita Marchione, PhD, a resident of the Villa Walsh convent in Morristown for 72 years is author of ten books on Pius XII, including: Yours Is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy; Pius XII: Architect for Peace; and the just released Did Pope Pius XII Help The Jews? Paulist Press, 2007. Her e-mail is

Sr.Margherita.Marchione@ATT.NET

Copyright © 1997-2011 by Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

*Material from this website may be reprinted and disseminated with accompanying attribution.

Hitler's Plan to Kidnap the Pope

By Dan Kurzman

(Catalyst, June, 2007)

As soon as Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was ousted from power on July 25, 1943, Adolf Hitler began hatching a plan to kidnap Pope Pius XII and plunder the Vatican. Clearly, the Fuehrer thought, the "Jew-loving" pope had encouraged King Victor Emanuel II and some rival fascist leaders to overthrow his Italian puppet.

The following day Hitler called for an urgent meeting of his military leaders. They must liberate Mussolini and return him to power, he cried. And "we must occupy Rome" and "destroy the Vatican's power, capture the pope, and say that we are protecting him." The pope might even have to be killed.

About six weeks later, on September 13, SS General Karl Wolff, the SS commander in Italy, received a phone call from his boss, SS Chief Heinrich Himmler, orchestrator of the Holocaust. Himmler, Wolff told me, bellowed that the Fuehrer wanted to see him urgently.

The general, who had previously served as Himmler's chief of staff, suspected why. Three days earlier, on September 10, German troops had marched into Rome, and German intelligence soon snatched Mussolini from captivity. The Duce was now to regain power in Nazi-occupied northern Italy, and Wolff would be sent to the capital in Fasano, near Salo, primarily to make sure that Mussolini followed the Nazi line. But Himmler had revealed to Wolff that Hitler had an additional secret mission in mind for him.

According to notes that Wolff told me he had taken during and after the meeting, Hitler barked: "I want you and your troops to occupy Vatican City as soon as possible, secure its files and art treasures, and take the pope and the curia to the north," probably Liechtenstein.

Referring to the threat of an Allied invasion of Italy, he added: "I do not want the pope to fall into the hands of the Allies or to be under their political pressure and influence."

Wolff promised to do his best but was conflicted, feeling that such an operation could alienate Italy and the entire Catholic world. Besides, he worshipped power, and the pope, like Hitler, was one of the world's most powerful leaders. The two men, although holding diametrically contrary views, were to the calculating general like earthly gods. Still, he felt, his mission might be useful—if he could sabotage it and obtain a blessing from Pius for saving his life and the Church itself. Wolff could perhaps also save his own life if Germany lost the war and he was tried for his war crimes.

But Wolff, who revered the SS, may have been prompted as well by other more sordid details of the kidnap plot that were later discovered in a letter that one Italian fascist leader wrote to another. It was headed Massacre of Pius XII with the Entire Vatican.

According to this message, which repeated what a high SS

official (perhaps Wolff) told the fascist writer, the purpose of the plot was to avenge "the papal protest in favor of the Jews"— apparently referring to an expected papal outcry when the Roman Jews were rounded up.

The plan called for soldiers of the SS Florian Geyer Cavalry, disguised in Italian uniforms, to invade the Vatican shielded by night, kill all members of the curia, and take the pope prisoner. Then troops of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division would surge into the Vatican to "rescue" the pontiff and kill the disguised SS men, assuming they were Italian assassins rather than SS compatriots. Thus, no witnesses.

If the pope tried to escape (or was perceived as trying to), he, too, would be shot. The world, like the panzer soldiers, would be led to believe that the "Italians" were guilty.

Meanwhile, Wolff described Hitler's order to Rudolf Rahn, the German ambassador to Italy, who was to be transferred from Rome to Fasano as the emissary to Mussolini's new republic. Rahn then joined in a conspiracy with Wolff and several other like-minded German officials against the plot and went to see Hitler. If the people learned that their pope had been abducted, Rahn told the Fuehrer and his chief lieutenants, they might rise up against the Germans.

Most of Hitler's men seemed cool to an attack, fearing such a reaction. Even Himmler, who had been meeting secretly with the German Resistance, was uncertain; he had to choose between striking the Church, which he hated, and seeking to improve his image in Allied eyes in case Germany lost the war.

The only one present who strongly supported an attack was Martin Bormann, Hitler's ruthless secretary, who wanted to replace Christianity with a new religion headed by the Fuehrer. Bormann, Rahn told me, turned beet-red with anger as he, the ambassador, made his plea. But Hitler trusted his secretary most, and it appeared that his advice would be

taken.

Meanwhile, General Wolff revealed to the Vatican that Pius was in danger. The pope loathed Hitler. And Hitler loathed him, viewing him as an obstacle to his –and Bormann’s–grandiose plan to capture the minds and souls of much of mankind after a victorious war.

In 1939, realizing what was at stake, Pius had actually joined in a conspiracy by some German generals to overthrow Hitler and, if necessary, a high Vatican official told me, to kill him. The risks, he said, to both the pope personally and the Church were incalculable. But in the end the plot fell through.

In 1943, as the tension between the two men grew, Monsignor Domenico Tardini, the Vatican’s assistant secretary of state, told the cardinals to “keep a suitcase ready because we might be deported at any time.” The pope himself called a meeting of cardinals to choose a possible successor in case he was kidnapped. And friends of the pope prepared a plan for him to flee to Spain if necessary, though he vowed to remain in the Vatican unless he was carried out.

Ernst von Weizsaecker, the German ambassador to the Vatican, another anti-Hitler conspirator, tried to convince Pius that he should remain silent when the Nazis rounded up the Jews of Rome. The Pope, until then, had felt that if he spoke out strongly against the Jewish genocide, Hitler would not only attack the Vatican but would drag out the hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Vatican institutions in which they were hiding throughout occupied Europe, as well as their Christian protectors.

But the German diplomats were afraid that he would nevertheless speak out publicly if the Roman Jews, his neighbors, were deported. If he did, they argued, there was virtually no chance that Hitler would cancel his kidnap plan.

And on October 16, the Gestapo in Rome began rounding up the Jews.

That rainy morning, Princess Enza Pignatelli Aragona, a friend of Pius, was awakened by a phone call from a friend, who informed her of the arrests. The princess told me she rushed to the Vatican and, interrupting a papal mass, blurted the news to the pope, crying, "Only you can stop them!"

"But they promised me that they would not touch the Jews in Rome!" Pius exclaimed. He then ordered Cardinal Luigi Maglione, his secretary of state, to summon Ambassador Weizsaecker urgently and protest the action. As the princess departed, the pope promised, "I'll do all I can."

When Weizsaecker arrived for a meeting with Maglione, he said he would "try to do something for these poor Jews." But, he asked, "what would the Holy See do if these things were to continue?"

"The Holy See would not want to be faced with the need to express its disapproval," the cardinal answered ... "If the Holy See were forced to [protest], it would trust the consequences to Divine Providence." In other words, he would speak out publicly if the roundup of Jews continued.

Shaken, the ambassador responded, "I think of the consequences that a protest by the Holy See might precipitate."

Clearly, the word "kidnap" was on both their minds.

Meanwhile, other German diplomats—and, the Vatican would say, the pope's nephew—urged an eminent priest, whom Berlin trusted, to write an urgent note to a cooperative German commander in Italy that was to be wired to Berlin echoing Cardinal Maglione's warning.

At the same time, in Germany, General Wolff managed to convince Hitler that he would have a hard time suppressing an

uprising in Italy if the pope felt forced to speak out and had to be dethroned. So, finally, Himmler ordered that the roundup stop after only about 1,000 of the 8,000 Roman Jews were picked up. And the pope, who had apparently been prepared to publicly condemn the roundup, felt there was no longer a need to do so now.

Several months later, in May 1944, Wolff secretly met with Pius, who, having learned of the general's role in helping to sabotage the kidnap plot, felt that the man must have some good in him, whatever his background.

Both men agreed that the war would best end in an Allied-German alliance, without Hitler, to halt the Soviet advance on Europe. And Wolff assured the pope that he would try to frustrate any new plot against him.

Wolff was overwhelmed when the pope then blessed him. He now had the full confidence of both the Vicar of Christ and the Antichrist, an incredible interworld feat. The general rose, clicked his heels together—and raised his arm in the Nazi salute! The pope smiled forbearingly. His visitor had simply confused his gods. But he would eventually betray one of them—surrendering the entire German army in Italy, on his own, to the Americans.

The kidnap plot had failed, but it had helped to shape the policies and attitudes of the pope, Hitler, and their subordinates during a most important segment of World War II history.

Award-winning author Dan Kurzman is the only journalist who ever interviewed General Karl Wolff. His newly released book, A Special Mission: Hitler's Secret Plot to Seize the Vatican and Kidnap Pope Pius XII, is available from Da Capo Press.

Copyright © 1997-2011 by Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

*Material from this website may be reprinted and disseminated with accompanying attribution.

Pius XII, John XXIII, and the Newly-Opened Archives

Ronald J. Rychlak
Catalyst, March 2007

Eugenio Pacelli became Pope Pius XII in 1939, after having spent nine years as Cardinal Secretary of State. Prior to that, he had been the Vatican's representative in Germany. During his lifetime, Pius XII's opposition to Hitler was well known. Nazis condemned him, Jews thanked him, and rescuers identified him as their inspiration. More recently, however, some writers have raised questions about how actively he opposed the Nazis. One even dubbed him "Hitler's Pope."

Critics often claim that the Vatican is hiding evidence of the Pope's activities during the Holocaust because, like most nations, the Holy See keeps diplomatic records sealed for a number of years. This respects the confidentiality of people who are still living, protects state secrets, and gives archivists time to index and catalog documents. The Vatican has, however, tried to accommodate the researchers.

In the 1960s, Pope Paul VI appointed a team of four Jesuits to cull through the archives for relevant documents from the Holocaust era. By 1980, they had produced and made public 11 thick volumes of documents. This did not satisfy the critics, because the actual archives containing post-1922 documents remained closed to outsiders.

In 2003, some archives from the years 1922-1939 were opened, and in 2006 more were opened. These archives cover the years during which the Nazis came to power and during which the future Pope Pius XII was very involved in German-Vatican diplomacy. Even though these archives (not to mention the 11 volumes prepared by the Jesuits) have not been fully mined, many researches, some with personal agendas, continue to clamor for more access.

Recently, 35 such researchers petitioned the Vatican to open all Holocaust-era archives. One of the petitioners, Seymour Reich, wrote to *Jewish Week* complaining that the beatification of Pius XII before all archives were open would cause "serious problems with the Jewish community's attitude toward the Vatican."

One wonders whether these petitioners are aware of the new archival evidence. One piece of recently discovered evidence is a letter written in 1923, when Hitler was just emerging as a force within Germany, in which papal representative Pacelli reports that "followers of Hitler" are persecuting Jews and Catholics. The future Pope refers negatively to this group (not yet known as Nazis) as "right-wing radicals." He also praises the "learned and zealous" Cardinal Archbishop Michael Faulhaber of Munich whom the radicals attacked because he "had denounced the persecutions against the Jews."

It had long been known that philosopher Edith Stein (recently canonized as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) wrote to Pope Pius XI in 1933 concerning the Nazis and their treatment of Jews. The precise words she used, however, were not known. It had been assumed that she asked for an encyclical—a formal papal document—condemning Naziism. It turns out there was no such request.

The reply letter to Stein, which was not seen until the new archives were opened, came from Secretary of State Pacelli. The future Pius XII assured Stein that the Vatican shared her concerns and that the Church would ultimately score a "final victory" over Nazism. The newly opened archives also show that even *before Stein sent her letter to Rome*, the Vatican had instructed its representative in Berlin to intervene with the German government on behalf of the Jews. Upon reviewing these documents, CNN's

Vatican correspondent concluded that its release "resolves a historical debate in favor of the Vatican's position."

An event that took place in 2003 shows why the Vatican is so concerned about archiving and indexing the documents. Shortly after new archives were opened, an Italian newspaper, *La Repubblica*, claimed that a 1934 letter had been found in which a Jesuit priest named Friederich Muckermann accused Secretary of State Pacelli of collaboration with the Nazis. The paper reprinted what it claimed was the actual letter.

After reading the article, officials from the Congregation For the Causes of Saints called the reporter to find out where he got his information. The reporter had not seen the letter; it had been read to him over the phone by a researcher who had been given access to the archives. Vatican officials pulled the files that the researcher had been using. Not long thereafter, they found the original letter.

As printed in the newspaper the letter was about 550 words long. The letter Fr. Muckermann wrote, however, was almost three times that long. The newspaper had changed words ("unjust" charges against the Holy See were published as "just" charges) and omitted entire passages ("The whole world knows that the German Bishops have done much" against Hitler) without any indication that the letter had been edited. Obviously, someone wanted to cast the Church in a bad light, and sloppy reporting let that happen.

Fortunately, the Vatican was able to issue a correction not long after the story was first published *precisely because of the care it had taken with the archives*.

A similar mistranslation hit the press in 2005, when the *New York Times* ran an article based on an unsigned document, not on Vatican letterhead and in the wrong language, that reportedly had been found in a Paris archive. According to the *Times*, this was a directive from Pius XII instructing Catholics who had taken Jewish children into their households during the Nazi occupation.

Supposedly, the Pope told these rescuers not to return the children to their parents if the youngsters had been baptized.

Within a week, thanks again to careful archiving, the Pope's original instruction was found, and it was quite different from the news reports. The Pope actually said that Catholic parents had an on-going duty to the Jewish families. They were instructed not to dump these children on the first charity group that approached them. They should, of course, return the children to their parents.

The current charge is that Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, was critical of Pius XII because he did not assist Roncalli's efforts on behalf of Turkish Jews. This is not new. As early as 1968, there were several false charges that John was a critic of Pius. Archbishop Loris Capovilla, John's private secretary, has expressly answered this claim:

With regard to the actions in favor of the Jews, affected particularly in Istanbul in the years 1935-1944, which was recognized and praised by Hebrew communities in Jerusalem, Istanbul, and the United States, it is obligatory to recognize that Roncalli was and declared himself the executor of the thought and the directives of Pius XII. He repeated, in fact "The papal representative is the eye, the ear, the mouth, the heart and the effective hand of the Pope."

Capovilla said that Roncalli's rescue efforts on behalf of Jews make sense "only if they are referred above everything else to Pius XII, of whom Roncalli was the careful and most faithful interpreter. Any strictly personal action, even though it be heroic, of Roncalli himself, would otherwise be inconceivable."

Throughout his life, John praised Pius. Before he was made Pope, John was offered thanks for his wartime efforts to save Jewish refugees. He replied: "In all these painful matters I have referred to the Holy See and simply carried out [Pius XII's] orders—first and foremost to save human lives." When Pius died, the future John XXIII said that Pius had been like a "public fountain" pouring forth good waters at which all the world, great and lowly, could profitably drink. As one reporter of the times wrote: "In the autumn of 1958 the world showed little doubt that one of its great ones had departed, and none showed less doubt than Angelo Roncalli."

As Pope, John prayed monthly before Pius XII's tomb and even considered taking the name "Pius XIII." One of the first things he did upon becoming Pope was to place a photo of Pius XII on his desk. He also had his predecessor's photograph published with a prayer on the back asking for his canonization. The prayer called Pius "a fearless defender of the Faith, a courageous struggler for justice and peace... a shining model of charity and of every virtue." A million of these cards were soon in circulation.

In his first Christmas broadcast, Pope John said that Pius XII's doctrinal and pastoral teaching "assure a place in posterity for the name of Pius XII. Even apart from any official declaration, which would be premature, the triple title of 'Most excellent Doctor, Light of Holy Church, Lover of the divine law' evokes the sacred memory of this pontiff in whom our times were blessed indeed." It should be noted that only a saint can be declared a Doctor of the Church.

It is true that some archives remains sealed, and historians do not have all of the evidence. At the same time, the evidence that we already have shows conclusively that Pope Pius XII intervened frequently; encouraged rescue efforts; and tried to comfort all victims, including persecuted Jews. During and after the war Pius XII's efforts were recognized by virtually everyone. As more archives are opened, after they have been properly cataloged and indexed, we can be confident that the reputation that he once enjoyed—as a firm opponent of the Nazis—will be reconfirmed. Catholics should all take pride in knowing that Pope Pius XII stood tall in a time of great difficulty.

Ronald J. Rychlak is the MDLA Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Mississippi. He is the author of *Hitler, the War, and the Pope (Our Sunday Visitor Press)* and *Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church Saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis (Spence Publishing)*.

Pius XII and Yad Vashem

Sister Margherita Marchione, Ph.D.

Catalyst, October 2006

Sister Margherita Marchione is the author of several books on Pope Pius XII, the latest being Crusade of Charity: Pius XII And POW's 1939-1945.

Below the portrait of Pope Pius XII in the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, Yad Vashem, there is a statement which is contrary to the truth and is unjust. It must be repudiated. I contacted the director of Yad Vashem and asked him to consider the efforts of the Pope who helped save hundreds of thousands of Jews and other victims of the Nazis. But will Yad Vashem at least correct the errors beneath his photo?

The statement includes:

"Pius XII's reaction toward the killing of Jews during the period of the Holocaust is controversial. In 1933, as the Vatican Secretary of State, in order to maintain the rights of the Church in Germany, he signed a Concordat with the Nazi regime even at the price of recognizing the racist Nazi regime. When he was elected Pope in 1939, he put aside an encyclical against racism and anti-Semitism prepared by his predecessor."

- *Pius XII wrote his own encyclical, "Summi Pontificatus," which did deal with racism.*

"Although reports about the assassination of Jews reached the Vatican, the Pope did not protest either by speaking out or in writing."

- *This is not true. Whenever Pius XII spoke out, there was immediate retaliation by the Nazis. There were more than 60 protests!*

"In December of 1942, he did not participate in the condemnation by members of the Allies regarding the killing of Jews. Even when the Jews were being deported from Rome to Auschwitz, the Pope did not intervene."

- *The Pope did indeed intervene. After that first day, the SS were ordered to stop the deportation of the Jews in Rome.*

"He maintained a neutral position except toward the end of the war when he appealed on behalf of the government of Hungary and of Slovakia. His silence and the absence of directives obliged the clergy in Europe to decide independently how they should behave toward the persecuted Jews."

- *This is not true. Members of the Church were ordered to protect all refugees and Jews.*

Pius XII's sanctity has been recorded. There are many volumes of depositions for his beatification. He was a humble person who did not want his accomplishments and many good works revealed. Respecting his wishes, Sister Pascalina Lehnert—his housekeeper—implemented the Pope's charitable works and served him faithfully from 1923-1958.

In her deposition, Sister Pascalina clearly stated that Pius XII did not issue a formal condemnation of Nazism because the German and Austrian bishops feared increased retaliation and dissuaded him from making additional protests that would undoubtedly irritate Hitler. And there was retaliation. During the persecution against Catholics, the Nazis not only destroyed churches and closed schools, but also arrested priests and Catholic leaders who were sent to concentration camps. All the protests of the Holy See were reported in a volume published in Germany in 1965.

Michael Tagliacozzo, a Jewish historian responsible for Beth Lohame Haghettaot Center in Italy, praised Pope Pius XII's wartime efforts. He recently provided the following information from *Hashavua*, the magazine of "Beth Alpha":

● Maurizio Zarfati, a resident in Acco, Hativath Golani St., wrote December 7, 1994, that he was saved with his parents, brother and sister in the monastery of the Augustinian Oblates of Santa Maria dei Sette Dolori in via Garibaldi. To permit men to enter, the Holy Father exempted them from rules of cloister. The Sisters gave up their rooms and moved to restricted quarters. ... There were 103 Jews in that convent.

● Soldier Eliyahu Lubisky, a member of the "Kibuz Beth Alpha," wrote on August 4, 1944, in the weekly *Hashavua*, that "he found more than 10,000 Jews in Rome. The refugees praised the Vatican for their help. Priests endangered their lives to save the Jews." In general, while begging for help, the Jews who were in contact with Pope Pius XII insisted that he avoid any public action. Sister Pascalina wrote: "The Pope not only opened the doors of the Vatican to protect the persecuted, but he encouraged convents and monasteries to offer hospitality. The Vatican provided provisions for these people. He ordered me to spend his inheritance and personal funds to provide for those who wished to leave Italy and go to Canada, Brazil, or elsewhere. Note that \$800 was needed for each person who emigrated. Many times the Pope would ask me to deliver to Jewish families a sealed envelope containing \$1,000 or more."

In 1944, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Anton Zolli, gave an interview to the *American Hebrew* (July 14, 1944). Rabbi Zolli, who had been hidden in the Vatican during the German occupation of Rome, told the paper, "The Vatican has always helped the Jews and the Jews are very grateful for the charitable work of the Vatican, all done without distinction of race."

In his book *Antisemitismo*, Rabbi Zolli would later write: "World Jewry owes a great debt of gratitude to Pius XII for his repeated and pressing appeals for justice on behalf of the Jews and, when these did not prevail, for his strong protests against evil laws and procedures... No hero in all of history was more militant, more fought against, none more heroic than Pius XII in pursuing the work of true charity!... and this on behalf of all the suffering children of God."

It is well known that Zolli converted to Catholicism after the war, taking as his baptismal name the pope's, Eugenio. As Zolli would write in his memoirs: "The Holy Father sent by hand a letter to the bishops instructing them to lift the enclosure from convents and monasteries, so that they could become refuges for the Jews. I know of a convent where the Sisters slept in the basement, giving up their beds to Jewish refugees."

Pope Pius XII made abundantly clear his judgment of the German aggression. In its front-page caption, the *New York Times* announced: "Pope Condemns Dictators, Treaty Violators, Racism; Urges Restoring of Poland." The paper printed the entire text of Pius XII's encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, on pages 8 and 9. It was a powerful attack on totalitarianism and racism. Pius XII condemned racism not only by publicly defending his Jewish brethren and explicitly using the word "Jew," but did so by quoting Saint Paul (Col. 3:10-11).

During his first year as pope, he created a special department for Jews in the German section of the Vatican Information Office.

According to the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* and other Jewish publications, some 36,877 papers were processed on behalf of Jewish refugees. In view of the plight of the Jewish people of Europe, resolutions were adopted at the January 1939 meeting of the Jewish Congress in Geneva. Dr. Nahum Goldmann, chairman, stated: "We record the Jewish people's deep appreciation of the stand taken by the Vatican against the advance of resurgent paganism which challenges all traditional values of religion as well as inalienable human rights upon which alone enduring civilization can be found."

Pius did more than protest. He immediately issued directives to all convents and monasteries to open their doors to protect Jews and other refugees. Some 80 percent of Italian Jews would survive the war, a much higher percentage than in many other nations. Refugees, mostly women and children, were even housed in the papal apartments at Castelgandolfo, where 28 children were born during the spring of 1944. Over 12,000 people found refuge in this papal villa. Day and night, Vatican trucks bearing the yellow and white flag brought food and other necessities to Castelgandolfo. After the war, as an expression of their gratitude, these refugees placed a memorial tablet "To Pope Pius XII, the Angelic Shepherd..." in the tower of the papal palace.

Tibor Baransky, a board member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and a Yad Vashem honoree, recalls that "Papal Nuncios helped the Jews. They got the orders straight from the Pope." He recounted that, while working at the age of 22 as a special representative of Angelo Rotta, the papal nuncio in Hungary, he heard from Jewish leaders who asked the pope not to raise a public outcry over the Nazi atrocities—since it would likely only increase their ferocity. (The Nazis had solidified their power in the early 1930s, and ferocious retaliation had been the typical response to every other Vatican protest.)

Working with Rotta—Pius XII's personal emissary in Hungary—Baransky carried blank documents, forged protective passes, and faked baptismal certificates to save as many Jewish lives as possible; when Nazis and their local sympathizers ignored these documents, Rotta sent Baransky to retrieve them.

In July 1944, the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish organizations organized a rally in Manhattan, New York, to protest the deportation of Hungarian Jews. In his discourse, Judge Joseph Proskauer, president of the American Jewish Committee, said: "We have seen how great was the work of the Holy Father in saving the Jews in Italy. We also learned from various sources that this great Pope has tried to help and save the lives of Jews in Hungary."

The anti-papal polemics of ex-seminarians like Garry Wills [*Papal Sin*], and John Cornwell [*Hitler's Pope*], of ex-priests like James Carroll [*Constantine's Sword*], and other lapsed or angry liberal Catholics exploit the tragedy of the Jewish people during the Holocaust to foster their own political agenda of forcing changes on the Catholic Church today.

Recently, John Cornwell conceded that he was wrong to have ascribed evil motives to Pius XII and now finds it "impossible to judge" him. Indeed, those who have slandered him contradict the words of Holocaust survivors, the founders of Israel, and the contemporary record of the *New York Times*. In short, Pius XII deserves to be honored, not castigated, at Yad Vashem.

