

# The Two-Thousand-Year Road to the Holocaust

## Session Eleven

### Christians and the Holocaust (1938-1945)

*“For almost twenty centuries...the church was the archenemy of the Jews – our most powerful and relentless oppressor and the world’s greatest force for the dissemination of anti-Semitic beliefs and the instigation of acts of hatred. Many of the same people who operated the gas chambers worshiped in Christian churches on Sundays...The question of the complicity of the church in the murder of the Jews is a living one. We must understand the truths of history.”*

**Abraham Foxman**

*“In the Christian world...erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament relative to the Jewish people and their presumed guilt circulated for too long, engendering sentiments of hostility toward this people. That contributed to a lulling of many consciences, so that – when Europe was swept by the wave of persecutions inspired by a pagan anti-Semitism that in its essence was equally anti-Christian – alongside those Christians who did everything to save those who were persecuted, even to the point of risking their own lives, the spiritual resistance of many was not what humanity expected of Christ’s disciples.”*

**Pope John Paul II**

*“...Christians need to remember that studying the Shoah is not simply reading about what happened to the Jews, but what some Christians...did to the Jews. The Shoah is part of Christian history....Not only do we study what happened to them but what happened to us Christians.”* **Michael McGarry**

### Roman Catholics and the Holocaust (1938-1945)

**By Anthony J. Sciolino**

**Summary:** The **National Socialist** (“Nazi”) movement in Germany arose from the ashes of World War I and led to the cataclysm of World War II. Its victims numbered *Fifty-five* million -- soldiers and civilians throughout Western and Eastern Europe who lost their lives in military operations or in the **Holocaust** (“*Shoah*”) and many, many more who were grievously injured, physically and emotionally, as well as those who had to endure the privations of post-war recovery and dislocation.

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-organized persecution and murder of at least 6 million Jews, 1.5 million children, by Nazi Germany *and* its European collaborators. Two-thirds of European Jewry and one third of world Jewry were slaughtered. Moreover, Nazi Germany's genocidal policies destroyed at least 5 million *non-Jews*, including Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), Poles, Soviet POWs, homosexuals, the mentally and physically disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, political and religious dissidents. In short, anyone deemed unfit to live among the Aryan "**Master Race**" in the **Greater Third Reich** (envisioned to encompass all of Europe including the Soviet Union) or anyone opposed to the Nazi regime was targeted for *elimination*.

The horrific actions of the Nazis and their collaborators violated every known moral precept. How then could the Holocaust have happened in 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany, a highly educated, industrially developed country at the very heart of Western culture and civilization, birthplace of Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, Wagner, Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation? Among the causes:

- A charismatic and evil leader
- Chaotic conditions/ popular discontent
- Masterful use of propaganda
- A brutal totalitarian regime
- State sponsored terrorism
- Territorial expansion
- *Anti-Judaism*/anti-Semitism
- Fear of "Judeo-Bolshevism"
- Extreme nationalism/patriotism
- Blind obedience to authority
- A paralysis of will
- Lack of moral leadership
- Widespread failure of *conscience*
- Collaboration, complicity and *indifference*

The Holocaust began in Nazi Germany and occupied Austria on November 8, 1938, with the state sponsored *pogrom* **Kristallnacht** ("Night of Broken Glass"), but quickly spread to all of Western and Eastern Europe. Contrary to what some revisionist historians contend, the Holocaust was neither uniquely German nor exclusively neo-pagan.

Prior to the autumn of 1938, the Nazi regime pressured Jews to emigrate from Germany, but few countries would accept them as refugees. As military conquest brought new territory and *millions* of Jews under Nazi domination, solving the "Jewish problem" required a more aggressive policy. At first the plan called for deporting Jews to ghettos or restricted areas in the East. With the **Einsatzgruppen** (mobile killing squad) massacres in 1941 and **Wannsee Conference's** decision in 1942 to implement the "**Final Solution**," the meaning of deportation changed drastically. Deportation became the means for sending Jews to industrialized *killing centers*, primarily located in Poland at **Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek**, and especially **Auschwitz-**

**Birkenau.** The world's response to the worsening situation for Nazi terrorism victims was disappointingly muted. So too was the response of *institutional* churches.

Religious affiliation in Nazi Germany was 94% Christian – 40% Roman Catholic, 54% Protestant. (Jews comprised less than 1 % of the population.) Organized into twenty-five dioceses headed by a Vatican appointed bishop, the Roman Catholic Church of Germany numbered over 20,000 priests for 20 million Catholics, as against 16,000 pastors for 40 million Protestants. The same organizational structure existed in other European countries where Christian populations likewise predominated. Religious affiliation in the **Greater Third Reich** was 43% Roman Catholic. Vatican assigned papal nuncios (ambassadors) served in each country.

Catholic and Protestant churches were “official” state churches in Germany; the state collected a church tax and subsidized church schools. Religious catechesis was part of the state education system; chaplains provided spiritual guidance to military personnel; and theology was taught in state universities. Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program professed "*positive Christianity*" as the foundation of the German state. (Emphasis mine)

Adolph **Hitler** and many of his top henchmen like **Heinrich Himmler** (SS chief and overseer of *death camps*), **Joseph Goebbels** (propaganda chief), **Reinhard Heydrich** (principle planner of the “*Final Solution*”) and **Rudolf Hoess** (architect and SS Commandant of *Auschwitz*), were baptized Catholics. Catholics comprised at least a third of Nazi Germany's military, police and security forces (22% of the **SS**), civil servants, judiciary, and concentration camp staff. The balance was Protestant.

In Hitler's worldview, *elimination* of Jews from Europe was a “*sacred*” mission. In *Mein Kampf* (“*My Struggle*”), his autobiography, first published in 1925, written while in prison serving a term for treason, he wrote: “*Today, I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*” This is an example of how his insidiously effective propaganda machine would effortlessly tap into the “poisonous groundwater” of Christian **anti-Judaism** (based on religion), easily blending into Nazi **anti-Semitism** (based on race). When Nazism defined the Jew as “demonic other,” in opposition to which it defined itself, it was building on an aspect of the European psyche firmly in place for centuries before Hitler was born.

**Roberto Farinacci**, member of Mussolini's Fascist Grand Council, while speaking in 1939 on “The Church and the Jews” declared: “*We fascist Catholics consider the Jewish problem from a strictly political point of view. . . . But it comforts our souls to know that if, as Catholics, we became anti-Semites, we owe it to the teachings that the Church has promulgated over the past twenty centuries.*” (Emphasis added)

Longstanding and widely held *hostility* toward Jews in Europe, therefore, helps explain why European Christians were generally *indifferent*\* regarding Jewish mistreatment. Like German Christians, non-German Christians too had been conditioned by centuries of church sanctioned anti-Judaism which *numbed* their consciences to this

particular form of injustice. Thus ethically *desensitized*, a significant number of Christians, *including* church leaders, were amenable to Nazi anti-Semitic activities, some even willing to participate in the killing. Most of the Holocaust's victims lived in countries with large Roman Catholic populations and/or heads of state, e.g. Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, France, Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia. And it should be noted that in Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Croatia, Rab and Serbia), not only were 80% of Yugoslav Jews murdered, but also 750,000 Orthodox Catholic Serbs; in Poland, not only were 90% of Polish Jews murdered, but also 3 million Polish Roman Catholics.

\*“*Indifference is the epitome of evil.*” Elie Wiesel

In their campaign to “*eliminate*” European Jewry, as their sphere of influence spread through territorial expansion, the Nazis found tens of thousands of willing **accomplices** among the populations of Eastern and Western Europe. Local and national police organizations, militias, security forces, auxiliaries, and individual citizens participated without compulsion in roundups and executions. In **Romania** the “enthusiasm” of volunteer ethnic German and Romanian army units taking part in mass shootings surprised even the **SS**. In **Vichy France** and elsewhere, Nazi leaders were surprised by the eagerness some locals displayed in trying to please their occupiers.

When the SS mobile killing squads of the *Einsatzgruppen* entered Eastern Europe, their comparatively thin ranks were augmented by native Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians. The particularly brutal *Hilfspolizei*, Ukrainian auxiliary police, hunted down Jews escaping from ghettos, murdering them without remorse. Without the willing participation of thousands of German and non-German Christians, including, most notoriously, **Fr. Jozef Tiso**, *priest* and fascist leader of the **Slovakia**; **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic**, death camp commandant, and **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac** of **Croatia**, all of whom were convicted of **war crimes** after the war (Tiso and Filipovic were *executed*), the Holocaust would have been significantly less effective in its lethality.

Regrettably, churches throughout Europe, for the most part, remained publicly silent in the face of Nazi *eliminationist* policy. Unlike in 1941 when private and public protest against the Nazi regime's “*euthanasia*” policy for the mentally and physically disabled, \* spearheaded by Roman Catholic **Bishop Clemens von Galen**, succeeded in halting or, at least, drastically reducing those killings, there was little public outcry against killing Jews. (Von Galen was later sent to a concentration camp.) Churches, more or less, buckled under pressure when the regime restricted their functions, closed many of their schools, and sent the courageous few of their members who protested Nazi excesses to concentration/ death camps. To ensure their *institutional* survival, churches chose “*accommodation*” to the regime over confrontation. The Vatican maintained its official wartime policy of “*neutrality*” despite repeated Nazi violations of the **Reich Concordat**, including provisions meant to protect Jewish converts to Catholicism.

\*“**Operation T-4**” -- the Nazi program begun in October, 1939 to eliminate *lebensunwertes Leben* (“the life unworthy of life.”) 70,000 to 80,000 people—including 4000-5000 Jews—were “*euthanized*.”

German Catholics, like their Protestant counterparts, were motivated by **patriotism** and Germany’s long tradition of respect for **authority**. *Extreme* patriotism and *excessive* respect for authority, however, became excuses for *blind* obedience to Nazi policies, including *morally* indefensible ones.\* At the **Nuremberg Trials** (1945-46), for example, an all too commonly heard refrain in defense of **war crime** charges was “*I was only following orders*.” **Charles Dubost**, a French prosecutor, in a statement before the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1946 stated: “*(Germany) allowed itself to be robbed of its conscience and its very soul. Evil masters came who awakened its primitive passions and made possible the atrocities which I have described to you. In truth, the crime of these men is that they caused the German people to retrogress more than 12 centuries*.” (Emphasis mine)

\*Obviously, not every Christian blindly obeyed state authority. There were “*people of conscience*,” like Jehovah Witness, **Mary Smigiel**, a Polish secretary who refused her German boss’ demand to type “Heil Hitler” on business correspondence. Her disobedience was reported to the Gestapo and she was sent to a Polish labor camp.

In deciding how to respond to Nazi racist policies most Christians, unfortunately, placed duty to obey *secular authority* higher than their duty to obey *conscience*.\* Jesus taught his followers to “*render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God*.” (**Matthew 22:21**) Far too many, however, ignored the distinction and rendered *all* to the Nazi “Caesar.” Making matters worse, most church leaders, Catholic and Protestant alike, metaphorically speaking, “*shepherds of the flock*,” failed to provide the *flock* with **moral leadership**. This is one of the themes of The Deputy, Rolf Hochhuth’s controversial play about Pius XII, which opened on Broadway in 1963.

\*“*Deep within our conscience we find a law which we have not laid upon ourselves, but which we must obey. Its voice, ever calling us to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in our heart at the right moment... For we have in our hearts a law inscribed by God... Our conscience is our most secret core and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths*.” Vatican II’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” (“**Gaudium et Spes**”), December 7, 1965

“*It is through our conscience that we see and recognize the demands of the divine law. We are bound to follow our conscience faithfully in all our activity so that we may come to God, who is our last end*.” Vatican II’s “Declaration on Religious Liberty,” (“**Dignitatis Humanae**”), December 7, 1965

A Catholic priest, on the other hand, who did provide moral leadership, was **Fr. Max Josef Metzger** -- a WWI Germany army chaplain and founder of the *Peace Alliance of German Catholics* -- who publicly protested against Nazi racist policies. Arrested and condemned for high treason, he was executed in April, 1944. Another was **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg** who joined **Bishop Clemens von Galen** of Munster in opposing “euthanasia” measures and openly prayed for Jews when presiding at Mass. Fr. Lichtenberg died on his way to **Dachau**.

Despite the *passivity* of churches (as institutions), *indifference* of most Christians and *collaboration* of others, in every Nazi occupied European country there were individual Christians who risked their lives to rescue Jews.\* Rescuers were those who in the face of unimaginable horror maintained their respect for human life and dignity by either protecting or refraining from harming Jews. Many, many more behaved compassionately, at least, by engaging in acts of kindness.

\* Approximately 20,000 rescuers have been recognized for their heroism as “**Righteous Gentiles**” by the Israeli government at **Yad Vashem** Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem.

Rescue efforts ranged from isolated actions of individuals to cooperative action of organized networks, both small and large, which resulted, for example, in approximately 100,000 “*hidden children*” surviving the Holocaust. The Allies’ prioritization of “winning the war” before attempting “rescue efforts,” widespread *apathy*, and lack of access to vulnerable refugees, however, hampered major rescue operations. Courageous people willing to hide Jews faced severe consequences if caught and formidable logistical difficulties in providing safe haven. Rescue activities were influenced not only by the extent of Nazi control of a geographic area, but by the hostile or sympathetic attitude of native populations. Hostility towards Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, was a particularly daunting obstacle. Sadly, moreover, not all rescuers acted from *moral* conviction. Some offered aid only in exchange for compensation.

The difference in Jewish survival rates varied greatly in the twenty one countries of Western and Eastern Europe, ranging from 95% survival in Denmark to 10% survival in Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. **Irving Greenberg**, member of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Council, explains the variation in Jewish survival rates as follows: “*Clearly the difference lay not in Jewish behavior, neither passive nor armed resistance. Armed resistance was a decision how to die, not how to live. Nor was it Nazi behavior that made the crucial difference, because it was murderous everywhere. The single critical difference was the behavior of bystanders. The more bystanders there were who resisted, the greater... the chance that Jews would survive.*” (Emphasis mine) Dr. Nechama Tec, a Holocaust survivor, has written extensively on the characteristics of Christians in Nazi-occupied Europe who engaged in rescue and resistance. She identified three common characteristics of these courageous people, 1) “*having a clear sense as to the difference between right and wrong; 2) willingness to stand on their own and; 3) refusal to follow unjust orders.*” (Emphasis mine)

During the Holocaust, tens of thousands of Christians acted humanely toward Jews, even heroically, but sadly, the vast majority did neither. Some were **perpetrators**, some **collaborators**, some **sympathizers** and, by far, most were **bystanders**. Church leaders, in general, were *passive*, sometimes complicit or worse. A few church leaders even *participated* as collaborators and perpetrators. Unfortunately, acts of **courage** and **conscience** were the exception, not the rule. All too seldom did Christians reach out with love to victims – a clear violation of Jesus’ teaching and example: “*Love one another as I have loved you.*” (**John 13**) What Christians did and failed to do continues to haunt and challenge the Christian world. As **Pope St. Gregory the Great** (590-604) said: “*Though scandal be taken at a truth, it is better to permit the scandal than to abandon the truth.*”

The role of **Pope Pius XII** (1939-58), before, during and after the Holocaust, is subject to ongoing controversy.\* The controversy started after the war when it came to light that Vatican approved “**rat lines**” assisted Nazi war criminals escape prosecution. It intensified in the early 1960’s when **Rolf Hochhuth**’s play The Deputy premiered in Berlin, London and New York. And it continues today with attempts by Catholic conservatives, including Pope Benedict XVI himself, to have Pius canonized a **saint**, despite opposition from Jewish groups and others who urge that no action be taken until all Vatican wartime archival records are made public.

*\*Controversial Caption\*\** with photo of Pope Pius XII at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem:

*“In 1933, when he was Secretary of the Vatican State, he was active in obtaining a Concordat with the German regime to preserve the Church's rights in Germany, even if this meant recognizing the Nazi racist regime. When he was elected Pope in 1939, he shelved a letter (the “Hidden Encyclical”) against racism and anti-Semitism that his predecessor had prepared. Even when reports about the murder of Jews reached the Vatican, the Pope did not protest either verbally or in writing. In December 1942, he abstained from signing the Allied declaration condemning the extermination of the Jews. When Jews were deported from Rome to Auschwitz, the Pope did not intervene. The Pope maintained his neutral position throughout the war, with the exception of appeals to the rulers of Hungary and Slovakia towards its end. His silence and the absence of guidelines obliged Churchmen throughout Europe to decide on their own how to react.”*

*\*\*The Vatican has protested this caption as being historically inaccurate. On his May 2009 visit to Jerusalem, Pope Benedict XVI refused to visit the building where the caption and photo are located.*

Some scholars argue that Pius should have done more to prevent or minimize the carnage of the Holocaust. The Vatican and his supporters, on the other hand, counter that Pius’ policy of *realpolitik* (“practical politics”) was a strategy aimed at keeping the

Church's hands free to help the maximum number of Jews and other Nazi victims. His detractors claim that as the most visible and influential religious leader in the world, from whom "exceptional" witness was expected, his "silence" and maneuvering behind the scenes amounted to *impotence* in the face of *egregious* injustice. They contend Pius played the role of *politician* when the world needed a *prophet*.

James Carroll, author of Constantine's Sword, describes the Church's dilemma: "*To imagine that the Catholic Church was craven in the face of the challenge posed by Adolf Hitler, that it failed to oppose him out of cowardice, is to ignore the brave history of Church resistance in the not too distant past (i.e. Kulturkampf) - this Church was not cowardly. Nor does the Church's anxiety about Bolshevism adequately account for its relatively more benign stance toward Nazism. Not even the other usual explanation, that the Church was too concerned with its own power and prerogatives to risk defending the Jews, is enough to account for what happened. No: Nazism, by tapping into a deep, ever-fresh reservoir of Christian hatred of Jews, was able to make an accomplice of the Catholic Church in history's worst crime, even though, by then, it was the last thing the Church consciously wanted to be.*" (Emphasis mine)

On April 8, 1965, Vatican Council II published its 16<sup>th</sup> document entitled *Nostra Aetate*, ("In Our Age"). With that single act the Church turned its back on 1900 years of official and unofficial anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic teachings and practices. The document directly repudiates and reverses the Church's age-old teachings on Jews as Christ-killers and as rejected children of God. It declares that "*mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, she deplors the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source.*"

*Nostra Aetate* specifically states:

- No collective guilt can be attributed to Jews, past or present, for the death of Jesus.
- God's covenant with the Jewish People is *valid* and *not* revoked.
- The Jews are *not* forsaken or condemned by God.
- Anti-Semitism is a *sin* and has *no* place in Christianity.

While scholars continue to debate the Church's role during the Holocaust, most agree:

- Not all Christians were involved in the Holocaust, but those who were involved were Christians.
- Christian anti-Judaism spawned and fueled Nazi anti-Semitism.
- Nazi racist policies had antecedents in Church history.

- The Vatican failed to withdraw its official support for anti-Judaism and to condemn anti-Semitism until Vatican Council II in 1965.
- The **Reich Concordat** “*neutered*” Catholic political opposition to Hitler and helped *legitimize* his regime.
- Two popes, Pius XI and Pius XII, failed to denounce, directly or explicitly, Nazi racist policies.
- The Vatican did not urge “passive resistance” to unjust racial laws and policies.
- No Catholic Nazi or collaborator was excommunicated or refused sacraments.
- The Vatican assisted former Nazis escape to South America after WWII
- Church leaders, for the most part, failed to provide “*moral*” leadership to assist the faithful in *conscience formation*.
- Christian acts of courage and conscience were the exception, not the rule.

## I. Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)

*“Pius XII and the Jews...The whole thing is too sad and too serious for bitterness... a silence which is deeply and completely in complicity with all the forces which carry out oppression, injustice, aggression, exploitation, war.”* **Thomas Merton**

*“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.”*

**Elie Wiesel**

**Background:** **Eugenio Pacelli** was a scholarly figure who, his detractors contend, feared **Bolshevism** more than **Nazism**. One of the goals of Pacelli's ecclesial career, both as Vatican Secretary of State and then as **Pope Pius XII**, like popes before him, was to preserve and extend the Church *institutional* authority. One way he sought to do this was through a series of Vatican **concordats** with national governments, including the fascist regimes of **Franco's** Spain, **Mussolini's** Italy and **Hitler's** Germany. The basis for these treaties was **canon law**, which he in his early career helped codify.

As fascism extended its influence in Europe in the 1920's and 30's, the Vatican, by and large, remained aloof, occasionally challenging fascist ideology when it impinged on important matters of church doctrine or threatened its *institutional* interests, but unwilling to interfere with what it considered *secular* concerns. The Vatican found most aspects of right-wing regimes agreeable, appreciating their patronage of the Church, their challenge to Marxism and their frequent championing of a *conservative* social vision.

Despite numerous appeals to do so, Pius XII refused to issue *explicit* denunciations of the murder of Jews or to call *directly* upon the Nazis to stop the killing. He steadfastly maintained the Vatican's position of **neutrality** during WWII and declined to associate himself with Allies' declarations against Nazi war crimes. The most he would do, critics contend, was to issue *vague* appeals against the oppression of unnamed racial and religious groups and try to ease the plight of Jewish **converts\*** to Catholicism caught up in Nazi persecution. And with a few notable exceptions, members of the Vatican diplomatic corps did little better.

\*Pius maintained Vatican "neutrality" during the war despite the Nazi regime's repeated violations of the Reich Concordat, including provisions intended to protect converts to Catholicism (see e.g., **Edith Stein**, *infra*)

In 1933, as secretary of state under Pope Pius XI, Pacelli negotiated the **Reich Concordat** with Nazi Germany, which, his detractors contend, *neutered* Catholic political opposition to Hitler's rise to dictatorial power and "legitimized" the Nazi regime. In November, 1938 (as secretary of state), Pacelli issued no public protest on behalf of the Vatican regarding the events of **Kristallnacht**, the first state-sponsored *pogrom* against Jews in Nazi Germany and Occupied Austria.

**Susan Zuccotti**, author of *Under His Very Windows*, concludes that although some Catholic clergy, religious and laity in October 1943 attempted to help Roman Jews avoid deportation to Auschwitz and some even took heroic measures to rescue them, there is no evidence of Pope XII's "guiding hand." Documentary evidence, she argues, indicates that Pius knew of the deportation and did nothing to stop it.

Pius XII's alleged *silence* in response to the Holocaust has been the subject of controversy since the play, "*Der Stellvertreter*," ("**The Deputy**") by Rolf Hochhuth, first staged on Broadway in 1963, made that provocative charge. "Deputy" evokes the papal title -- "**Vicar of Christ**," implying that by, among other things, not publicly challenging the Nazis and their racist policies, Pius failed in Christ's **prophetic** role as exemplar of ethical behavior. His detractors accuse him of everything from anti-Semitism to collusion with the Nazi regime,

one of them, **John Cornwell**, even branding him “Hitler’s Pope.” His defenders, among them, **David G. Dalin, Pierre Blet S.J., Sr. Margherita Marchione, Ralph McInerney, Pinchas Lapide, Ronald J. Rychlak and Jose M. Sanchez**, on the other hand, argue that his behind the scenes diplomacy (*realpolitik*) saved hundreds of thousands of Jews and other innocent victims, preventing greater catastrophe. Pius’ failures, in their view, whatever they might have been, were those of a holy man with human shortcomings who was compelled to act in particularly tragic circumstances.

His detractors charge that Pius’ “anemic” response to the Holocaust was influenced more by *politics* than *conscience*. There is currently a movement, primarily among conservatives within the Vatican curia, spearheaded by Pope Benedict XVI himself, to have Pius XII canonized a **saint**, which is stoking the controversy initiated by “The Deputy.” Jewish groups have asked Benedict to delay Pius’ canonization process until the Vatican opens all wartime archival documents to scholarly scrutiny. In addition, there is controversy over a caption alongside Pius’ photo currently on exhibit at **Yad Vashem** in Jerusalem, see *infra*.

St. Peter the Apostle, by tradition the Church’s first pope, died a *martyr*’s death by crucifixion in the 1<sup>st</sup> century on Vatican Hill in Rome. Pius XII, his 260<sup>th</sup> successor, died of natural causes in 1958 on Vatican Hill nineteen centuries later in the papal apartments attached to St. Peter’s Basilica.

## 1. Shaping the Pope

a. Eugenio Pacelli was born in Rome in 1876, the year after **Pius IX**’s encyclical letter challenging **Bismarck**’s attempt to limit church influence in newly unified Germany during Kulturkampf. Pacelli, raised in a family with close ties to the Vatican, was steeped in the Church’s long tradition of papal *authoritarianism*, **anti-Judaism** (hostility toward Jews based on religion), and opposition to “**modernity**.” His seminary education concentrated on canon law, not theology. Like most of his religious contemporaries, he distrusted Western parliamentary democracy and equated Judaism with ***atheistic communism*** (“Judeo-Bolshevism”), both viewed as mortal enemies of the Church.

b. He was ordained a priest in 1899, the year after Pope Leo XIII condemned the heresy of “**Americanism**.” In 1901 with little or no pastoral experience, he entered the Vatican **Secretariat of State**. One of his first assignments was to help redraft the Church’s Code of Canon Law, a task which took him and another priest more than 10 years to accomplish. The new Code was published in 1917. **Canon 218** defined the pope’s authority as “*the supreme and most complete jurisdiction throughout the Church, both in matters of faith and morals and in those that affect discipline and Church government throughout the world.*”

c. Distinguishing himself as a canon lawyer and diplomat, he was elevated to the rank of cardinal in 1929 and appointed Vatican Secretary of State in 1930. An admitted *Germanophile*, Pacelli lived in Germany from 1917, the year he was appointed **papal nuncio** to Munich, until 1929. **John Cornwell**, author of *Hitler's Pope* writes (Pacelli's) "*principle task in Germany was...the imposition, through the 1917 Code of Canon Law, of supreme papal authority over ... Catholic bishops, clergy, and faithful.*"

d. Although knowledgeable about Nazi ideology, Pacelli spoke little publicly about Hitler's racist theories before becoming pope. He did, however, in a 1935 speech two years after Hitler became chancellor, describe the Nazis as "*miserable plagiarists who dress up old errors with new tinsel.*" He added, "*It does not make any difference whether they flock to the banners of the social revolution, whether they are guided by a false conception of the world and of life, or whether they are possessed by the superstition of a race and blood cult.*"

e. As secretary of state, the Vatican's second most powerful position, Pacelli assisted in writing and editing *Mit brennender Sorge* ("*With burning Concern,*")\*, an encyclical of his immediate predecessor **Pope Pius XI**, published on March 10, 1937. The encyclical dealt with the condition of the Church in Germany and criticized Nazism. It objected to violations of various *institutional* rights and prerogatives *guaranteed* to the Church in the **Reich Concordat** (*see infra*). Addressed to bishops, it was to be read in all German churches.

\* The encyclical, among other things, asserted that Hitler was deceiving Germans and the international community. It affirmed that the Nazi leader was "*perfidious, untrustworthy, dangerous and determined to take the place of God*" and condemned, in particular, the paganism of the national-socialism ideology, the myth of race and blood, and the fallacy of their conception of God. *Mit brennender Sorge*, however, never directly mentioned Nazi racial policies. Instead of protesting anti-Semitism, it referred to the Jews as those who were "*constantly straying*" from God and who had "*crucified*" Christ.

f. In 1938 at an International Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest while the Hungarian legislature was in the process of promulgating anti-Jewish laws, patterned after the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935, Pacelli addressed the Congress referring to Jews "*whose lips curse (Christ) and whose hearts reject him even today.*" He was elected Pope on March 2, 1939, choosing the name Pius XII.

g. Although aware of the Nazi regime sanctioned *pogrom* against Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses in Germany and Occupied Austria in November, 1938, **Kristallnacht**,\* "*the Night of the Broken Glass*," starting point of the Holocaust, neither Pacelli, then secretary of state, nor Pius XI issued any public criticism.

\* One critic charges that the Vatican and German Catholic Church response to Kristallnacht consisted of “foreboding silence” and an effort to protect Catholics, particularly Catholic converts from Judaism, at the expense of non-converted Jews.

h. According to **Garry Wills**, author Papal Sin, Pacelli was a leading proponent of the then prevailing view that **Bolshevism** posed the gravest threat to the Church in the modern world (second only to Judaism itself). The Nazis, under this view, might try to *manipulate* churches, but they, at least, allowed them to exist. Bolshevism, on the other hand, *abolished* them altogether. Even when Nazism began to look evil, Wills continues, it remained not only “*the lesser of two evils, but a bulwark against the greater one.*” Wills contends that this mindset, among other things, helps explain why when the Church criticized the Nazi regime, its language was “*cautious and negotiatory.*”

i. Upon becoming pope in March 1939, Pius XII had a momentous decision to make -- what to do with his predecessor Pius XI’s draft encyclical, ***Humani Generis Unitas?***\* The decision was momentous because, for the first time, the Church would *publicly* and *explicitly* condemn Nazi anti-Semitism and call for an end to Jewish persecution. Pius decided, according to one detractor, to “*bury*” it in the Vatican archives. See Goldhagen, A Moral Reckoning, p.39-40. The encyclical, now referred to as the “**Hidden Encyclical**” was never issued.

\*The encyclical reads in pertinent part: “*It becomes clear that the struggle of racial purity ends by being uniquely the struggle against the Jews. Save for its systematic cruelty, this struggle is no different in true motives and methods from persecutions everywhere carried out against the Jews since antiquity.*”

j. In October 1939, Pius XII, in his first encyclical, “***Summi Pontificatus***,” warned against theories which denied the unity of the human race and against the deification of the State, all of which he saw as leading to a real “*hour of darkness.*” It did not, however, condemn Nazi anti-Semitism, call for cessation of persecution, nor even specifically mention “Jews.”

k. One detractor points out that the only time Pius spoke out *explicitly* against Hitler\* was during a speech to the College of Cardinals, one month *after* World War II ended.

\* **Jacques Maritain**, a French Catholic philosopher, after the war became a major force in the emergence of European Christian Democracy and in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. After the war, Maritain tried unsuccessfully to have Pius XII speak out against the evils of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. Maritain *resigned* his post as French ambassador to the Vatican in 1948 over what he regarded as Pius’s “*inaction*” on the issue of German guilt.

## 2. The Reich Concordat

a. One of Pacelli's objectives as secretary of state was to negotiate a concordat to define church-state relations in Nazi Germany. Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933. On July 20th of that same year, Pacelli and Vice Chancellor **Von Papen** signed the **Reich Concordat** which granted "freedom of religious practice" to Catholics in Germany. (The Reich Concordat was patterned after the **Lateran Treaty** of 1929 between the Vatican and Fascist Italy.) Among various provisions, the German Catholic Church was granted freedom to administer its religious schools *without state interference*. In return, the Church agreed not to interfere in "political" matters, which, in effect, banned organized Catholic political activity in the **Third Reich**. As a consequence, Catholics received the Church's *imprimatur* to cooperate with the new regime, even to join the Nazi party.\*

\*Before 1933, some German Catholic bishops had warned the faithful about Nazi racism. In certain dioceses it was forbidden for Catholics to join the Nazi party; some bishops even refused the sacraments to Nazi officials (a form of *excommunication*). Consequently, relatively few Catholics voted for Hitler or his party candidates during elections between 1930 and 1933.

**John Cornwell** describes the effect of the Reich Concordat in this way:

*"Eventually only the Catholic Center Party stood in his (Hitler's) way to absolute power. Here Pacelli was very helpful. Seeking a concordat between the Reich and the Vatican, Pacelli betrayed the millions of Catholic supporters of the Catholic Center Party by signing an agreement with Hitler that resulted in a ban on political activity by members of the church. It was the only democratic party left in Germany. With its disbanding, Hitler became the supreme leader of the country. Nothing stood in his way. The Vatican had even become the first state to recognize his odious regime, giving it tacit approval by its Reich Concordat."* Pacelli, Cornwell concludes, was interested primarily in advancing the Church's *institutional* interests in general and enhancing papal power in particular.

b. On September 2, 1933 **Cardinal Adolf Bertram**, Archbishop of Breslau, wrote to Pacelli, *"Will it be possible for the Holy See to put in a warm-hearted word for those who have been converted from Judaism to the Christian religion, since either they themselves, or their children or grandchildren, are now facing a wretched fate because of their lack of Aryan descent?"*

Pacelli agreed and raised the issue with German authorities. His note in defense of *"non-Aryan Catholics"* was careful to acknowledge that the Vatican's concern was not with the fate of other *"non-Aryans."* The note began, *"The Holy*

*See [has] no intention of interfering in Germany's internal affairs.” That is to say, the Holy See recognizes that the fate of non-Aryans is a matter outside the circle of Vatican concern, with one exception. “The Holy See takes this occasion,” Pacelli wrote, “to add a word in behalf of those German Catholics who themselves have gone over from Judaism to the Christian religion, or who are descended in the first generation, or more remotely from Jews who adopted the Catholic faith, and who, for reasons known to the Reich government, are likewise suffering from social and economic difficulties.”*

c. The **Catholic Center Party**, founded in 1870 when Bismarck was chancellor of newly unified Germany, had functioned as a *democratic* counterweight to the rise of Nazism. Some historians speculate that if the Center Party had continued to exist, Hitler's rise to absolute power might not have occurred. According to John Cornwell, see *supra*, the Reich Concordat ensured that whatever Catholic resistance to Nazi fascism arose would be “*isolated and impotent.*”<sup>\*</sup> The way was clearer, according to Cornwell, for the Nazi regime to pursue its genocidal racist policy and the virtual conquest of Europe. The Reich Concordat, first treaty to be concluded with a sovereign state, lent *legitimacy* to the new regime and was viewed as a diplomatic victory for Hitler. It made him, in the colorful German saying, *salonfähig* (“*fit for association with decent people.*”)

<sup>\*</sup>Hitler, speaking to **Cardinal von Faulhaber** of Munich on November 4, 1936 said: “...*think, my Lord Cardinal...and discuss with other church leaders how you want to support the great task of National Socialism...and how you want to establish friendly relations with the state. Either National Socialism and the Church will win together or they will both go under.*”

d. Banning Catholic political activity in Germany also resulted in “neutering” Catholic labor unions and other Catholic grass roots organizations. **James Carroll**, author of *Constantine’s Sword*, terms the Reich Concordat a “*foundation stone of the Shoah.*” The Church, he argues, was capable of resisting state power in Germany, as it had done successfully sixty years earlier during **Kulturkampf** (1871-1878). At that time with its *institutional* interests challenged by anti-Catholic legislation, **Pius IX** used the considerable powers of the papacy to force Bismarck to back down.

Among other things, Carroll points out, Pius IX urged “**passive resistance**”<sup>\*</sup> to the offending legislation, threatening to **excommunicate** any Catholic who cooperated with the anti- church policies. As a consequence, the German Catholic Church not only survived the threat to its institutional self interests, but prospered. Pius XII, on the other hand, according to Carroll, *capitulated* to Hitler which ensured that Nazism could rise unopposed by “*the most powerful Catholic community in the world.*” In negotiating the Concordat,

Carroll contends, the future Pius XII was “*elevating Catholic institutional self-interest above Catholic conscience,*” acting more like a politician than a prophet.

\*“Passive resistance” is a method of nonviolent protest against laws or policies in order to force a change or to secure concessions; it is also known as “nonviolent resistance” and is the main tactic of *civil disobedience* favored by **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

e. **Heinrich Bruning**, German chancellor (1930-32) wrote in his diary:

“*All success (Pacelli believed) could only be attained by papal diplomacy. The system of concordats led him and the Vatican to despise democracy and the parliamentary system...Rigid governments, rigid centralization, and rigid treaties were supposed to introduce an era of stable order, an era of peace and quiet.*”

### 3. Papal Power

**Background:** The Church is the oldest continuously functioning institution in the world and, for centuries, one of its most powerful – a force capable of moving armies, inspiring saints, and shaping the lives of its members. The Church steered Western civilization through historical events such as the fall of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages, the Crusades, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution. For centuries church and state were twin pillars of “**divinely ordered**” society; both closely aligned, each promoting and reinforcing the other’s authority. This cooperative arrangement began in 321C.E, when **Emperor Constantine** converted to Christianity and granted it official status in the Roman Empire. Constantine and his successors then used religion as a means of maintaining and expanding political control over the empire. The Church in turn relied on state authority to promote and enforce its doctrinal orthodoxy. In Christian Western Europe during the **Middle Ages** (from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) when **feudalism** was the form of political and social organization, this mutually cooperative arrangement worked particularly well. During that time, the Church was at the pinnacle of its power.

Church power, however, was seriously threatened by the **Protestant Reformation** (1517-1648) when breakaway *reformed* churches unaffiliated with Rome were established, shattering the unity of western Christendom. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Church’s influence was even more seriously threatened by the **Enlightenment (Age of Reason)** and the political revolutions it spawned. Enlightenment thinkers advocated *reason* as a means to establish an authoritative system of aesthetics, ethics, government, and even *religion* which would allow *individuals* to obtain “objective truth” *unmediated* by the Church. Scientists like **Copernicus, Galileo** and **Newton** proposed scientific theories that contradicted church doctrine. “Radical” ideas expressed in the French Revolution’s rallying cry “**liberty, equality, fraternity**” undermined church authority based on *Scripture* and *tradition*. The Church’s privileged position within society was

called into question and even violently challenged. *Separation* of church and state; *freedom* of religion, *freedom* of speech, for example, became revolutionary goals. As one way to protect its *institutional* interests, the Vatican formed treaties (**concordats**) with secular rulers designed to salvage the Church's favored treatment within society. This practice continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century when concordats were negotiated with fascist regimes in **Franco's** Spain, **Mussolini's** Italy and **Hitler's** Germany.

Throughout history, the Church has influenced political ideas and challenged powerful secular leaders in a variety of European countries. The Church taught the "**divine right of kings**" and from the faithful demanded *obedience* to secular rulers; secular rulers, in turn, demanded obedience from their subjects to church authority. Popes were absolute monarchs of the **Papal States** in central Italy from 781 to 1870. For centuries power struggles and political intrigue between church and state were commonplace. **Lord Acton**, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic nobleman, charged that the Renaissance Papacy's primary sin was "*power and politics.*"

In the first millennium emperors convened early church councils to settle doctrinal disputes. In the first and second millennia emperors and kings influenced the selection of popes and bishops; some secular rulers even deposed certain popes. Popes, in turn, *excommunicated* kings and queens (e.g. **King John**, **Henry VIII**, and **Elizabeth I** of England; **Victor Emmanuel** of Italy) and even emperors (**Holy Roman Emperors Frederick II** and **Henry IV**, **Byzantine Emperor Leo III**, **Emperor Napoleon I** of France). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope **John XXIII** excommunicated **Fidel Castro** of Cuba based on a 1949 decree of Pius XII forbidding Catholics (under penalty of excommunication) from supporting communist governments.

Over the last 2,000 years, popes have had an enormous impact on the world stage\* -- in religious, geopolitical, legal, social, artistic and cultural matters. In some ways, the history of the papacy mirrors the history of Western civilization because at every important historical moment popes participated either as promoters or critics. Many hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics throughout the world have looked to the pope for guidance and leadership. Moreover, many non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians alike have respected him as a pre-eminent spiritual leader. It must be pointed out that of the 265 popes that have reigned to date, not all have lived up to the high standards expected of the successor of **Peter the Apostle** -- admittedly, some have been saints, but some have been scoundrels, some wicked, some efficient, some incompetent, some learned, some simple, some visionary, some narrow-minded -- and from 217 to 1447, there have been more than 30 "*antipopes.*"

\*When **Josef Stalin** was told that **Pope Pius XII** opposed his policies, the Soviet leader famously replied: "*How many divisions has the pope?*" A half-century later in November, 1989, when without a bullet

being fired, the **Berlin Wall** came down, Eastern Europe came out from behind the **Iron Curtain** and the Soviet empire fell, Stalin's last successor, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, made this admission: “*Everything that happened in Eastern Europe in these last few years would have been impossible without John Paul II.*” Stalin failed to see that a pope can, indeed, influence historical events even without armed forces.

a. Pius XII, as pope, held three official positions. He was **supreme pontiff**, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, a supra-national power in Europe for centuries, with a network of bishops, priests, and other religious men and women throughout the world, all loyal to him. He was **Chief of State** of Vatican City, a sovereign state, with his own diplomatic corps, newspaper and radio station. He was **Bishop of Rome**, the Eternal City, symbolic seat of Christianity.

b. His views, cloaked in divine authority, reinforced by the dogma of papal “infallibility” on matters of faith and *morals*, could influence 400 million Roman Catholics worldwide, including, of course, those in European countries under Nazi control. Moreover, as **spiritual leader\*** of the world’s largest religion, his views could influence non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians as well. As pope, Pius was the world’s most visible and influential religious leader.

\*Leadership principle....”A good leader is proactive; is a role model; sets standards of excellence for others to follow; inspires and motivates.”

c. Among his papal powers were: access to mass media, including the Catholic press, and to a worldwide audience; influence over an extensive international education system ranging from elementary schools to universities; the availability of **excommunication** (denial of the sacraments); writing **encyclicals**; placing books on the ***Index Librorum Prohibitorum\**** (a list of books forbidden to Catholics).

\* Neither Pius XI nor Pius XII placed Mein Kampf on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Mein Kampf, first published in 1925, in which Hitler sets forth his eliminationist/ racist and territorial expansionist agenda, has been banned in Germany since 1945.

d. From his papal “bully pulpit,” he could have urged Catholics and all people of conscience to *passively resist* Nazi racist policies, as one of his predecessors, **Pius IX**, had done 60 years earlier during ***Kulturkampf*** in Bismarck’s Germany. Specifically, for example, he could have forbidden priests to permit access to church records for the purpose of identifying Jews from Catholics.

Following implementation of the **Final Solution** in 1942, although fully informed about what was happening in the death camps, Pius did *not* denounce the *industrialized* killing, thereby depriving the faithful of the facts necessary to make an *informed* moral judgment\* on how to respond.

*\*"Deep within our conscience we find a law which we have not laid upon ourselves, but which we must obey. Its voice, ever calling us to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in our heart at the right moment... For we have in our hearts a law inscribed by God... Our conscience is our most secret core and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths."* Vatican II's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," ("**Gaudium et Spes**"), December 7, 1965

*"It is through our conscience that we see and recognize the demands of the divine law. We are bound to follow our conscience faithfully in all our activity so that we may come to God, who is our last end."* Vatican II's "Declaration on Religious Liberty," ("**Dignitatis Humanae**"), December 7, 1965

#### f. Excommunication

Pius XII neither *excommunicated* nor threatened to excommunicate any Nazi or Nazi collaborator, including **Fr. Jozef Tiso** of Slovakia or **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic** of Croatia, both of whom were executed for war crimes after the war. He did, however, excommunicate several German Catholics who advocated cremation as an alternative to burial. In post war Italy, he excommunicated any Italian who joined the Italian Communist Party or voted for its candidates. And in post war **Croatia**, after the trial in which **Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac** was convicted of *war crimes*, Pius excommunicated all Catholics who participated in the court proceedings, including most of the jury members, see *infra*.

g. According to **Daniel Jonah Goldhagen**, author of A Mortal Reckoning and Hitler's Willing Executioners, there is no record of Pius XII privately instructing anyone to assist Jews; or publicly protesting or explicitly instructing anyone to *rescue* Jews in Rome.

Goldhagen charges that "*Had Pius XI and Pius XII, church leaders and lower clergy used their pulpits and their enormous number of newspapers and diocesan publications with their huge, faithful readerships in Germany and around Europe to declare anti-Semitism a vicious delusion and to denounce the persecution of the Jews as a grievous crime and sin, then the political history of Europe would have been different, and the fate of the Jews much better.*" Goldhagen, A Moral Awakening, p.44.

#### 4. Pleas for Help

a. Throughout the Holocaust, pleas for help on behalf of Jews were directed to the Vatican. In the spring of 1940, for example, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, **Isaac Herzog**, asked the Vatican Secretary of State, **Cardinal Luigi Maglione**, to intercede to stop the deportation of Jews in Spain. Herzog later made a similar request for Jews in Lithuania. **Cardinal Theodor Innitzer** of Vienna informed Pius XII about Jewish deportations from Austria in 1941. In 1942, the papal nuncio to the **Slovakia**, then ruled by the fascist dictator **Fr. Joseph Tiso**, see *infra*, reported that Slovak Jews were being deported and sent to death camps. In each instance, Pius XII did nothing.

b. In October 1941, the Assistant Chief of the U.S. delegation to the Vatican, **Harold Tittman**, asked Pius to condemn Nazi atrocities. Tittman was informed that the Holy See would remain "*neutral*" because condemning atrocities would have a negative influence on Catholics in Nazi occupied countries.

c. In late August 1942, after more than 200,000 Ukrainian Jews had already been murdered, Ukrainian Orthodox Metropolitan **Andrej Septyckyj** wrote to Pius, characterizing the Nazis as "*a regime of terror and corruption, more diabolical than that of the Bolsheviks*". The Pope replied, quoting the psalms, and advising Septyckyj to "*bear adversity with serene patience.*"

d. On September 18, 1942, **Monsignor Giovanni Montini**, the future Pope Paul VI, wrote to Pius, "*The massacres of the Jews reach frightening proportions and forms.*" That same month when **Myron Taylor**, U.S. representative to the Vatican, warned the Pius' silence was endangering his moral prestige, Secretary of State **Maglione** responded that it was impossible to verify rumors about crimes committed against Jews.

e. **Wladislaw Racziewicz**, a priest and president of the Polish government-in-exile, appealed to the Pius in January 1943 to denounce publicly Nazi atrocities, (also being inflicted on millions of Catholic Poles.) **Bishop Konrad Preysing** of Berlin also requested, at least twice, a papal denunciation. In each instance there was no apparent response.

f. The Vatican seldom opposed Jewish mistreatment and rarely denounced discriminatory practices during the 1930's and '40's in Europe. When official statements were made, they usually admonished national governments to act with "*justice and charity,*" disapproving only "*excesses.*"

g. "*Silence gives consent.*" **Pope Boniface VIII** (1012-24)

h. “*All that is required for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.*” **Edmund Burke**

i. “*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.*” **Martin Luther King Jr.**

## 5. Vatican “Neutrality”

a. In December 1942, the Allies issued a declaration, "**German Policy of Extermination of the Jewish Race**," declaring Nazi perpetrators would be brought to justice after the war. When, U.S. delegate to the Vatican, Harold Tittman asked Secretary of State Maglione if the Pope could issue a similar proclamation, Maglione replied that the Pope was “*unable to denounce publicly particular atrocities*” because to denounce Nazi atrocities specifically would require him to denounce Bolshevik atrocities as well. The Pope, accordingly, would only condemn atrocities *in general*.\*

\*Critics charge that Pius, as an *anti-modernist* who distrusted Western parliamentary democracy and opposed communism, feared **Bolshevism** more than Nazism, considering the latter as *lesser of two evils*.

b. After Nazi Germany invaded Poland in September, 1939, English minister to the Vatican, **Francis Osborne** wrote: “*The Holy Father appears to be...adopting an ostrich-like policy toward these notorious atrocities. It is felt that as a consequence of this exasperating attitude, the great **moral authority** enjoyed by the Papacy throughout the world under Pius IX has today been notably diminished.*” (Emphasis mine.)

c. Pius XII did speak out *generally* against the extermination campaign. On January 18, 1940, after the death toll of Polish civilians was estimated to be 15,000, for example, he said in a radio broadcast, “*The horror and inexcusable excesses committed on a helpless and a homeless people have been established by the unimpeachable testimony of eye-witnesses.*” During his Christmas Eve radio broadcast in 1942, he referred to the “*hundreds of thousands who through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction.*” But he never mentioned the Jews by name.

d. In 1941, after **Marshal Petain**\* of Vichy France questioned whether the Vatican would object to anti-Jewish laws then under consideration in the French legislature, Pius responded that the Church condemned racism, but did *not* repudiate every rule against Jews. When Petain’s government introduced “*Jewish Statutes*,” the Vichy ambassador to the Holy See informed Petain that the Vatican did not consider the legislation in conflict with Catholic teachings, as long as it was carried out with “*charity and justice.*”

\* After the war, Petain was convicted of **war crimes**.

e. In a September 1940 radio broadcast, Pius termed Vatican policy towards the Nazi regime as "**neutrality**,"\* but stated in the same broadcast that where morality was involved, no neutrality was possible. (Taken at face value that would seem to imply that a national policy of genocide was not a moral issue... surely an absurd conclusion!) Despite the Nazi regime's repeated violations of rights "guaranteed" to the Church in the Reich Concordat, the Vatican continued to maintain its wartime policy of neutrality.

\*One critic explains the Vatican's policy of "reserve and conciliation" in this way: *"The goal was to limit the global conflict where possible and to protect the influence and standing of the Church as an independent voice. Continually apprehensive of schisms within the Church, Pius strove to maintain the allegiance of Catholics in Germany, in Poland and elsewhere. Fearful too of threats to the Church from the outside, he believed that he dared not confront the Nazi or Italian fascists directly."*

f. *"The hottest places in hell are reserved to those who in a period of moral crisis maintain their neutrality."* **Dante**

g *"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."* **Bishop Desmond Tutu**

## 6. Italy's Jews

a. Before 1938, Axis partner, Mussolini's *fascist* Italy, had not joined Nazi Germany in its national policy of persecuting Jews. Jews had resided in Rome for over 2000 years, since before the time of the apostles Peter and Paul, and, like Jews in Germany, were well assimilated into Italian society. It was not uncommon for Jews to marry Catholics. In general, Italians considered Jews to be friends and neighbors. Some Jews joined the Italian Fascist Party for patriotic reasons.

b. In 1938, however, Mussolini initiated an anti-Jewish campaign entitled "**Manifesto of Italian Racism**," declaring Italians to be part of the *pure race*. Race laws, similar to the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935, were enacted in Italy, as they would be enacted elsewhere in occupied Europe. "Manifesto of Italian Racism," among other things, outlawed Jews to marry Christians (*miscegenation*); barred them from attending or teaching in public schools; prohibited them from serving in the military or holding public service jobs; stripped them of their citizenship and deprived them of property. Foreign Jews living in Italy as refugees were rounded up and confined in internment camps, similar to camps for Japanese-Americans in the U.S.

c. The situation for Italian Jews took a dramatic turn for the worse in 1943 when Mussolini was overthrown. **Pietro Badoglio** became Prime Minister and began to negotiate an immediate ceasefire with the Allies. Enraged, Hitler used force to bring Italy back into the Axis fold. Despite the increasingly desperate situation on the Eastern Front, he sent troops to occupy northern and central Italy. **SS** troops, along with the most zealous of Mussolini's supporters, began rounding up Jews in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Trieste, and other northern cities.

d. In September, 1943, Nazi troops occupied Rome. According to documents, Pius XII was aware that Jewish deportations from Italy were impending and of what fate awaited deportees. Publicly, the Pope remained *silent*. Privately, his defenders claim, he instructed Catholics to provide refuge for Jews. The Vatican itself hid 477 Jews and another 4,238 Jews were protected in Roman monasteries and convents.\*

\* 40,000 Italian Jews (80%) survived the Holocaust because ordinary Italian citizens, as well as lower-level Italian government, military and church officials, "*passively resisted*" the Nazis, e.g. by hiding Jews, obstructing deportations or helping them escape to unoccupied southern Italy.

e. On October 16, 1943, the Nazis rounded up 1,007 Roman Jews, the majority, women and children, and amassed them in a piazza adjacent to Rome's historic synagogue, within walking distance of the papal apartments in St. Peter's Square. Ironically, the piazza, located within the historic Jewish *ghetto*, first built in Rome by decree of **Pope IV** in 1555, contained one of Rome's many churches, *Santa Maria del Pianto* (ironically, "St. Mary of Sorrow"). A convoy of trucks, taking a route that passed in front of St. Peter's Square, brought deportees to a railway terminal in central Rome from where they were transported to Auschwitz -- 811 were gassed upon arrival, only 16 survived.\*

\* In total about 8,000 Jews were deported from Italy to Nazi death camps during the Nazi occupation -- most perished.

f. John Cornwell writes that because most Italians were sympathetic to the plight of Rome's Jews, Nazi occupiers, fearing public disorder, preferred not to carry out the deportation order. Pius, however, *despite* being urged by occupation leaders to protest, refused to do so. Historian **Susan Zuccotti** contends that Pius defenders like **Pinchas Lapide** who claim the Pope encouraged Italy's rescue efforts are *unsubstantiated, without foundation* and is, in fact, *contradicted* by credible evidence. She writes "*Pius XII personally seems to have made no contacts and no appeal to Italians for the Jews. Likewise, he seems never to have appealed personally to any German officials. At the very least, he might have asked that Italian Jews might be allowed to remain in internment on Italian soil. He did not do so.*" (Zuccotti, Under His Very Windows, p. 294).

g. In Act III of “The Deputy,” as Roman Jews are being rounded up for deportation, the fictionalized Fr. Riccardo (who later dies at Auschwitz) declares ...”*doing nothing is as bad as taking part ...God can forgive a hangman for such work, but not a priest, not the Pope!*”

## 7. Papal Responses

a. As Vatican Secretary of State in 1938, Pacelli did, in fact, speak out against fascist Italy’s race laws, but *only* against specific parts that dealt with religiously mixed marriages and children of those marriages. He said nothing about restrictions imposed on Italian Jews in general. Moreover, as noted previously, he, as Vatican Secretary of State, issued no condemnation of *Kristallnacht* (“the Night of Broken Glass”) which occurred in November of 1938.

b. In March of 1939, the month he was elected pope, he approved 3,000 visas to enter Brazil for Jewish converts to Catholicism. Two-thirds of these were later revoked, however, because of “improper conduct,” presumably meaning that *converted* Jews reverted to practicing Judaism.

c. Pius XII, on occasion, did intervene positively on behalf of Jews, albeit behind the scenes. During the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, for example, he, along with his papal nuncio in Budapest, **Angelo Rotta**, urged the fascist Hungarian government to be moderate in its plans concerning their treatment. Pius protested repeatedly against deportation of Hungarian Jews. His protests, combined with those from the **King of Sweden**, the **International Red Cross**, **Great Britain** and the **United States** resulted in halting deportations from Hungary on July 8, 1944, evidencing, *contrary* to claims of Pius’ defenders, that papal intervention could, in fact, achieve favorable results without provoking greater catastrophe.

d. In the later stages of the war, Pius XII appealed to several Latin American governments to accept “emergency passports” obtained by several thousand Jews. Through his efforts, 13 Latin American countries decided to honor these documents, despite Nazi threats to deport passport holders.

e. The Vatican answered a plea to save 6,000 Jewish children in Bulgaria by helping to them flee to Palestine. At the same time, however, Cardinal Maglione wrote to the apostolic delegate in Washington, **A.G. Cicognani**, noting this assistance did not mean the Pope supported **Zionism**.

## 8. Politics behind Papal Policy

a. Concordats negotiated with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany obliged the Church to steer clear of “political” issues. This was cited as a primary *constraint* against Vatican protests of Mussolini’s and Hitler’s race policies, notwithstanding that the Reich Concordat was routinely violated by the Nazi regime.

b. Critics contend that another reason for the Vatican's policy of neutrality, despite escalating Nazi atrocities, was Pius' desire to broker the peace treaty ending World War II.\* After U.S. officials advised him in 1942 that the Allies would accept nothing less than total surrender and an Allied victory appeared likely, Pius increased his efforts on behalf of Jews. Late in 1942, for example, he began to advise German and Hungarian bishops that it would be prudent to go on record as speaking out against the Holocaust. This, critics claim, demonstrates that the real motive for papal intervention after 1942 was based more on *political* than *moral* inclination.

\*In The Deputy, Rolf Hochhuth's pope says: "*Secretly...silently, cunning as serpents – that is how the SS must be met.*" But Pius' advisor, Fr. Fontana says: "*Your Holiness, may I ask in all humility: Warn Hitler that you will compel five hundred million Catholics to make Christian protest if he goes on with these mass killings!*" To which the pope replies, "*Fontana! An advisor of your insight! How bitter that you too misunderstand Us. Do you not see that disaster looms for Christian Europe unless God makes Us, the Holy See, the mediator?*"

c. **Guenter Lewy**, author of The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany writes: "...the Vatican's interest in a strong Germany as a bulwark against Russian Communism played in the development of (its) policy toward the Nazi regime."

d. His defenders argue that Pius did not publicly denounce Nazi racist policies because he believed doing so would cause Jews more harm than they were already suffering. **Jose M. Sanchez**, author of Pius XII and the Holocaust, for example, points out that after Catholic leaders in the Netherlands protested Jewish deportations, the Nazis began rounding up Jewish converts (to Catholicism) as well as non-converted Jews.

Sanchez concedes, however, that a similar negative response did not occur in France after some Catholic bishops protested Nazi mistreatment of French Jews. Moreover, he does not address why Christians were able to protect nearly all the Jews in Denmark, or why Christians in Norway as well as in Bulgaria and elsewhere were able to protect substantial numbers of Jews without provoking Nazi reprisals.

## 9. Recently Uncovered Evidence

a. The **International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission**, comprised of three Jewish and three Catholic scholars, was appointed in 1999 by the Vatican's **Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews**. In October of 2000, the Commission finished its review of archive material released by the Vatican, and submitted their preliminary findings to the Commission's President,

**Cardinal Edward Cassidy.** Their report, entitled "**The Vatican and the Holocaust**," refuted several defenses for Pius' silence.

b. The claim, for example, that Pius was unaware of the seriousness of the situation of European Jewry during the war was determined to be inaccurate. Numerous documents demonstrate he was well-informed about the full extent of Nazi practices. A letter from **Konrad von Preysing**, Bishop of Berlin, caught the particular attention of the commission. In that letter dated January, 1941, Preysing confirms that "*Your Holiness is certainly informed about the situation of the Jews in Germany and the neighboring countries. I wish to mention that I have been asked both from the Catholic and Protestant side if the Holy See could not do something on this subject...in favor of these unfortunates.*" The letter, a direct appeal to the Pope himself, without intermediaries, as noted *supra*, provoked no response. In 1942, an even more compelling eyewitness account of the mass-murder of Jews in **Lvov** (Ukraine) was sent to the Pope. This, too, yielded no response.

c. The Commission also discovered several documents that refuted the Vatican claim that it did everything possible to facilitate emigration of Jews out of Europe. Internal memoranda confirm, for example, Vatican opposition to Jewish emigration to Palestine. "*The Holy See has never approved of the project of making Palestine a Jewish home... [Because] Palestine is by now holier for Catholics than for Jews.*" Some church leaders, however, ignored this policy by assisting Jews to emigrate there.

d. The Vatican claim it needed to remain neutral has also been challenged. In January of 2001, a document was discovered in which Monsignor **Giovanni Montini**, Pius XII's Secretary of State, detailed and denounced several abuses committed by the Soviet Army against German residents in the Soviet Union. The report was viewed as evidence that the Vatican had no compunction about speaking out against atrocities committed by Russian *communists*, even when doing so violated its official policy of neutrality.

e. In 2004, a diary kept by **James McDonald**, the League of Nations high commissioner for refugees, came to light. It documents that in 1933, McDonald raised the issue of Jewish mistreatment with Pius, then Vatican secretary of state Eugenio Pacelli. McDonald writes about his interest in helping a group of Jewish refugees from the Saar region, then occupied by the Nazis. Pius' defenders cite the Pope's intercession on behalf these refugees as evidence of his sympathy for their plight. According to McDonald, however, when he discussed the matter with Pacelli, "*The response was noncommittal, but left me with the definite impression that no vigorous cooperation could be expected.*" Pacelli did intercede in January 1935, but only after McDonald agreed that American Jews would use their influence in Washington to protect church property then being threatened by the Mexican government.

f. In 2006, an Israeli scholar, **Dina Porat**, discovered correspondence between **Haim Barlas**, emissary of a Jewish agency sent to Europe in the 1940s to save Jews, and **Angelo Roncalli**, papal nuncio in Paris (and future **Pope John XXIII**) in which Roncalli criticized Vatican *inaction* regarding the Holocaust. In June 1944, Barlas sent Roncalli a copy of a report compiled by two Jews who escaped from Auschwitz documenting mass murder at the camp. Roncalli forwarded the report to the Vatican, which claimed it did not know about the report until October. Earlier, Roncalli had written to **Fr. Joseph Tiso**, president of Slovakia, (who was executed for war crimes after the war), see *infra*, at the request of Barlas asking Tiso to stop deportations.

g. In 2005, the Italian newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, discovered a letter dated November 20, 1946, indicating that Pius XII ordered Jewish children baptized during the Holocaust not to be returned to their parents. (Cf. Pius IX's response in the Edgardo Mortara forced baptism case)

## 10. "Ratlines"

a. At the end of World War II during Pius' pontificate, the Vatican aided in the escape of hundreds of Nazis from Europe by issuing them fake passports. These so-called "**rat lines**" involved a network of European monasteries used to harbor war criminals. Numerous perpetrators were spirited out of Germany and the former Nazi occupied territories to Latin America. Notorious mass murderers like **Klaus Barbie** and **Ante Pavelic**, see, *infra*, were delivered to the port of Buenos Aires disguised as priests. As in the case of Barbie, some went on to become expert advisers to Latin American dictators in techniques of repression and torture perfected by the Nazis.

b. **Bishop Alois Hudal** was rector of the Pontificio Istituto Teutonico Santa Maria dell'Anima in Rome, a seminary for Austrian and German priests, and "Spiritual Director of the German People resident in Italy." An avowed anti-Communist, Hudal frequently inveighed against Jews, linking the so-called "*Semitic race*" - which allegedly "*sought to set itself apart and dominate*" - with the nefarious movements of democracy and internationalism and even denouncing an alleged Jewish bankers' conspiracy to become "*the financial masters of the Eternal City*" After the war, Hudal was assigned to minister to German-speaking POW's and internees then held in camps throughout Italy. In December 1944, the Vatican Secretariat of State received permission to appoint a representative to "visit the German-speaking civil internees in Italy," a job assigned to Hudal.\*

\*Hudal used this position to aid the escape of Nazi war criminals, including **Franz Stangl**, commandant of Treblinka, **Gustav Wagner**, commandant of Soribor, **Alois Brunner**, responsible for the Drancy internment camp near Paris and in charge of deportations in Slovakia to German concentration camps, and the notorious **Adolf Eichmann**, "*the architect of the Holocaust.*" Some of these war criminals were held in

internment camps without identity papers or enrolled on camp registers under false names. Other war criminals hiding in Italy sought out Hudal, as his role in assisting escapes became known through the Nazi grapevine

In his memoirs Hudal wrote: *“I thank God that He [allowed me] to visit and comfort many victims in their prisons and concentration camps and to help them escape with false identity papers.”*

## 11. Sainthood for Pius XII?

a. Members of the Vatican **Congregation for Saints' Causes** met on May 8, 2007 to consider the cause of sainthood for Pope Pius XII and voted to recommend that **Pope Benedict XVI\*** formally declare Pius “venerable,” a preliminary step in the canonization process.

\* Pope Benedict XVI subsequently declared, in one of his most forceful defenses to date, that Pius XII did all he could do—and more than most—to stop the Holocaust. *“Wherever possible, he spared no effort in intervening in (the Jews’) favor either directly or through instructions given to other individuals or to institutions of the Catholic Church. ...Pius’ wartime interventions were “made secretly and silently precisely because, given the concrete situation of that difficult historical moment, only in this way was it possible to avoid the worst and save the greatest number of Jews.”*

In 2008, while celebrating a Mass commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pius' death, Pope Benedict added: *“In light of the concrete situations of that complex historical moment, he (Pius) sensed that this was the only way to avoid the worst and save the greatest possible number of Jews.”* Benedict then indicated that he prayed the process of beatification *“can proceed happily.”* In December 2009, Benedict confirmed the “heroic virtues” of Pius, opening the door to beatification once a miracle is attributed to the late pope.

b. **Abraham Foxman**, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, has urged Pope Benedict to suspend indefinitely the canonization process for Pius until secret World War II Vatican archives are declassified and fully examined *“so that the full record of the pope’s actions during the Holocaust may finally be known.”*

c. **Fr. Peter Gumpel, S.J.**, *relator* in the cause of Pius XII’s canonization has said: *“The cause of the beatification and canonization of Pope Pius XII, who is rightly venerated by millions of Catholics, will not be stopped or delayed by the unjustifiable and calumnious attacks against this great and saintly man.”*

d. *“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. **Martin Luther King, Jr.***

e. *“The principle that governs the biblical vision of society is, ‘Thou shall not stand idly by when your fellow man is hurting, suffering, or being victimized.’ It is because that injunction was ignored or violated that the catastrophe involving such multitudes occurred.” **Elie Wiesel.***

f. *“Who is a saint in the time of evil?... The question is not whether the Pope was evil, but: was he a saint? I must ask the Church to re-assess its conscience. Does not ‘sainthood’ indicate a superhuman effort? And if the Church wants to be a teaching testimony to everyone, should it not take extra care, even if it leaves the establishment of those days less than perfect?”*

**Albert H. Friedlander**

## **12. Controversial Caption\* with photo of Pope Pius XII at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem:**

*“In 1933, when he was Secretary of the Vatican State, he was active in obtaining a Concordat with the German regime to preserve the Church's rights in Germany, even if this meant recognizing the Nazi racist regime. When he was elected Pope in 1939, he shelved a letter against racism and anti-Semitism that his predecessor had prepared. Even when reports about the murder of Jews reached the Vatican, the Pope did not protest either verbally or in writing. In December 1942, he abstained from signing the Allied declaration condemning the extermination of the Jews. When Jews were deported from Rome to Auschwitz, the Pope did not intervene. The Pope maintained his neutral position throughout the war, with the exception of appeals to the rulers of Hungary and Slovakia towards its end. His silence and the absence of guidelines obliged Churchmen throughout Europe to decide on their own how to react.”*

\*The Vatican has protested this caption as being historically inaccurate. On his May 2009 visit to Jerusalem, Pope Benedict XVI refused to visit the site where the caption and photo is located.

## **13. “Nostra Aetate” Repudiates Anti-Judaism**

a. On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965 Vatican Council II published its 16<sup>th</sup> document entitled *Nostra Aetate*, (“In Our Age.”) With that act the Church finally turned its back on centuries of official and unofficial anti-Jewish teaching and practice. The document directly repudiates and reverses the Church’s age-old teachings of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. It declares that *“mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the gospel’s spiritual love and by no political*

*considerations, it deplores the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and from any source.”*

*Nostra Aetate* specifically states:

- No collective guilt can be attributed to Jews, past or present, for the death of Jesus.
- God’s covenant with the Jewish People is *valid* and *not* revoked.
- The Jews are *not* forsaken or condemned by God.
- Anti-Semitism is a *sin* and has *no* place in Christianity.

#### 4. What Might Have Been?

*“Of all sad words of mouth or pen the saddest are these: ‘It might have been’”* **John Greenleaf Whittier**

a. Pius XII’s response to the *Shoah* was complex and inconsistent. Neither a demon nor an angel, he reigned as pope during arguably the most *evil* period in human history. At times, he tried to help Jews and was successful, which leads to legitimate speculation about what additional success he might have had, if, he had done more. One can only imagine, for example, what *might have been* if, as “Vicar of Christ,” he had threatened to excommunicate any Catholic who joined the Nazi party or who cooperated with Nazi racist policies; or if he had excommunicated Adolph Hitler or any Catholic Nazi or collaborator. Or if, as a respected worldwide *voice of conscience* and the world’s *most influential* religious figure, he had publicly condemned Nazi atrocities or urged passive resistance to racist laws in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and elsewhere in Europe.

b. Pius’ critics focus on the particular evil that Nazism presented during the Holocaust and charge that a religious leader of his high rank and moral authority was duty bound to be *clear, forthright and outspoken* in condemning Nazism. If racial terrorism had been *explicitly* condemned by him, these critics contend, more Christians could have been inspired to engage in rescue and resistance. One can only speculate how many more Christians might have acted *humanely*, if Pius and his predecessors had lived up to the title “Vicar of Christ.”

c. No one can know for certain what difference Pius XII could have made, but **Guenter Lewy** speculates: "*A public denunciation of the mass murders by Pius XII, broadcast widely over the Vatican radio and read from the pulpits by the bishops, would have revealed to Jews and Christians alike what deportation to the East entailed. The pope would have been believed, whereas the broadcasts of the Allies were often shrugged off as war propaganda.*"

d. Critics offer various explanations for Pius’ response to the Holocaust, e.g., anti-Semitism; pursuit and preservation of papal authority; fear of Nazi reprisals; fixation with diplomacy; duty to preserve the *institutional* church; belief

that private interventions would be more productive than public ones; fear of alienating German Catholics and causing schism; preference for Nazism over Bolshevism as the “lesser of two evils. Whatever his motives, however, it is hard to escape the conclusion that he, like so many others in positions of influence, could have done more to avert the Holocaust, a human catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude.

d. For **David Kerzter**, author of The Popes Against the Jews, the real scandal lies not in the fact that Pius XII remained silent, but in “*the role his predecessors played over the previous (centuries) in dehumanizing the Jews, [and] in encouraging large numbers of Europeans to view them as evil and dangerous.*” Here is what others say:

e. “*Nazi anti-Judaism was the work of godless, anti-Christian criminals. But it would not have been possible without the almost two thousand years’ prehistory of ‘Christian’ anti-Judaism.*” **Hans Kung**

f. “*We must continue to remind ourselves that, in a free society, all are involved in what some are doing. Some are guilty, all are responsible.*”  
**Abraham Joshua Heschel**

g. “*It is true that each must finally answer personally for the condition of his own conscience. It is also true that when the flock drifts far astray and wanders into mortal danger the **shepherds** are uniquely guilty.*”(Emphasis mine)  
**Franklin H. Littell**

h. “*Religion must be prepared to suffer: it cannot always be diplomatic.*”  
**Albert H. Friedlander**

i. “*To remain silent and indifferent is the greatest sin of all*”  
**Elie Wiesel**

j. “*Justice, justice you shall pursue.*” **Deuteronomy 16:20**

k. “*Love one another as I have loved you.*” **John 5:12**

## **II. Roman Catholics in Germany (1938-45)**

“*Christianity in Germany bears a greater responsibility before God than the National Socialists, the SS and the Gestapo. We ought to have recognized the Lord Jesus in the brother who suffered and was persecuted despite him being a communist or Jew.*”

**Martin Niemoller**

**Background:** The Holocaust burst forth in Germany during the late 1930's, but its seeds, as noted previously, were planted many centuries earlier. A confluence of factors was at work, among them:

- A charismatic and evil leader
- Chaotic conditions/Public discontent
- Masterful use of propaganda
- A brutal totalitarian regime
- State sponsored terrorism
- Territorial expansion
- Anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism
- Extreme nationalism/patriotism
- Blind obedience
- A *paralysis* of will
- Lack of moral leadership/guidance
- Widespread failure of conscience
- Collaboration, complicity and *indifference*

Until the very end of WWI in 1918, despite enormous casualties and sacrifices on the home front, Germany seemed to be winning the war. Then, in November 1918, the roof caved in. Inexplicably to many Germans, Germany lost the war! The newly created democratic government of the **Weimar Republic** was forced by the victorious Allies to sign a humiliating treaty and to begin its political life carrying a staggering financial burden of reparations. The war had widened the divisions in German society and the new regime would have to deal with revolutionary forces unleashed by the **Russian Revolution** (1917), spearheaded by Germany's own Communist Party. Jews were *scapegoated* for Germany's defeat in WWI (*Der Dolchstoß* "Stab in the Back") and *blamed* for the ensuing chaotic social, political and economic conditions of the Weimar Republic.

Among the chaotic conditions were **hyperinflation** of 1923; the harsh economic stabilization measures of 1924; the **Great Depression** of 1929 with its failed businesses and skyrocketing unemployment; and rampant **social and political unrest**, including rioting in the streets between members of rival political parties and their bands of hooligans. A relatively minor political party, the **National Socialist Party** (aka **Nazi Party**), under the leadership of an obscure former Austrian army corporal, Adolph Hitler, soon began using negative campaigning and revolutionary propaganda techniques to exploit the nation's chaotic conditions and the new Weimar government's failure to deal effectively with them. The Nazis cleverly and calculatingly crafted their party platform to appeal to discontented Germans. Anti-Semitism, undergirded by Christian anti-Judaism,\* became a cornerstone of their propaganda campaign. Despite repeated electoral failures, the Nazi Party in early 1933 won close to 30% of the electoral vote for the **Reichstag**. In January 1933, President **von Hindenburg** appointed Hitler appointed chancellor. Following the **Reichstag fire** on February 23, 1933, which Hitler used as a

pretext to seize dictatorial power, he banned the German Communist Party, and immediately began to fashion his brutally totalitarian (fascist) regime.

\*Most Catholics are aware of the many saints, popes, religious founders and ordinary believers who down through the ages have genuinely lived the ideals of our faith. But what most Catholics are not aware of is how for millennia Church history has harbored a tremendous anti-Jewish legacy -- a legacy of intense hatred toward Jews. For example, it was **St. John Chrysostom** who called the Jews “*the most miserable of all men...lustful, rapacious, greedy and perfidious bandits.*” It was **St. Augustine** who referred to them as “*slave-librarians*” who exist “*for the salvation of the nation but not for their own (salvation.)*” It was **Pope Pius IX** who said: “*It is from the (Jews) that the synagogue of Satan, which gathers its troops against the Church of Christ, takes its strength.*” In short, it was our own Catholic forebears who first demonized Jews as “*social outcasts.*”

Moreover, history’s first organized assault on Jews and first instance of *mass murder* occurred in 414 C.E. when the people of newly Christianized Alexandria, Egypt massacred the city’s Jewish community. Around the same time, history’s first recorded charge of **ritual murder** (blood libel) was brought in Antioch. During the **First Crusade** called by Pope **Urban II** in 1096, killing of Jews reached particular frenzy. **Crusaders**, on their way to the Holy Land, murdered over 10,000 Jews in France and Germany. Mass killing resumed during subsequent crusades and has occurred periodically thereafter, for example, in Czarist Russia where violent **pogroms**\*\* took place between 1871 to 1906, particularly following the assassination of Czar Alexander II.

\*\**Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”) was a state sponsored pogrom.

During the first year and a half of Nazi rule, the regime focused primarily on establishing and consolidating its control over German society. With passage of the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935,\* the racial core of Nazi ideology began to emerge in ever greater clarity. The main target of Nazi racial fanaticism was the relatively small Jewish population of Germany (less than one percent of the population), which as territorial expansion began with the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1938, soon focused on all of European Jewry (8.86 million). Approximately 3 million Jews lived in Poland.

\*One of the saddest facts of Church history is that many of the laws passed by the Nazis and their collaborators against the Jews, including the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which stripped Jews of their human dignity and civil rights, had direct antecedents in Catholic laws through the centuries. Historian **Raul Hilberg** has compiled an outline entitled, “*Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures,*” in which he

identifies 15 canonical laws that have direct parallels in Nazi law. One of them is the **Fourth Lateran Council**'s decree requiring Jews to wear distinctive marking(s) on their clothing. The Council was convoked by **Pope Innocent III** in 1213. The Nazis required Jews to wear a *Star of David* patch, so as to be easily identifiable.

Another sad fact of history, as noted previously, is that it was Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), Vatican secretary of state under **Pope Pius IX**, who in 1933 negotiated the **Reich Concordat**, making Vatican City the first "state" to acknowledge Hitler as leader of Germany, lending credence and legitimacy to his regime.

Religious affiliation in Nazi Germany was 94% Christian – 40% Roman Catholic, 54% Protestant. Organized into twenty-five dioceses headed by a bishop appointed by the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church of Germany numbered over 20,000 priests for 20 million Catholics, as against 16,000 pastors for 40 million Protestants. The same type of church organizational structure existed in other European countries where Christian populations likewise predominated. 43% of the **Greater Third Reich** was Roman Catholic. The Vatican assigned papal nuncios (ambassadors) in each country.

Catholic and Protestant churches were "official" state churches of Nazi Germany; the state collected a church tax and subsidized church schools. Religious catechesis was part of the state education system; chaplains provided spiritual guidance to military personnel; and theological faculties continued to function within state universities. Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program professed "*positive Christianity*" as the foundation of the German state.

**Adolph Hitler** and many of his top henchmen like **Heinrich Himmler** (SS chief and overseer of *death camps*), **Joseph Goebbels** (Nazi propaganda chief), **Reinhard Heydrich** (principle planner of the "*Final Solution*") and **Rudolf Hoess** (architect and SS Commandant of *Auschwitz*), were baptized Catholics. Catholics comprised at least a third of Nazi Germany's military, security forces (22% of the **SS**), police, public service, judiciary, and concentration camp staff. The balance was Protestant.

Hitler's diabolically effective propaganda machine under the direction Joseph Goebbels relentlessly bombarded the German public with messages -- in feature films, faked newsreels, phony documentaries, fabricated news stories, radio plays, even in children's books – *demonizing/dehumanizing* Jews and *scapegoating* them for every major problem of German society. Anti-Semitic demonstrations were regularly choreographed; mass rallies and demonstrations were staged to build popular support. All news was carefully controlled, censored and relentlessly positive. Newspapers, radio and newsreels spewed forth a steady stream of orchestrated information emphasizing the regime's "positive" achievements. The official view of Nazi society was one of happy farmers, workers and middle-class Germans working together in a classless society – a *Volksgemeinschaft*, or "people's community." Hitler, a charismatic leader and gifted

orator, was glorified with *semi-religious* fervor and revered as “savior” of the “Aryan nation.”

The relentless propaganda barrage was accompanied by *state-imposed terror* designed to cower opponents and quash dissent. The **Gestapo** usually made arrests at night using brutally repressive tactics to create fear, pursuant to its policy (“**Fog and Night.**” Although there were Germans who disapproved of Nazi excesses, few were willing to speak out, especially when it became clear that not only they, but also their entire families would be severely punished. Children, indoctrinated from early age by ideologues of the **Nazi Youth Movement**, *informed* on their parents. Neighbor spied on neighbor. Opposition to the regime, as a consequence, was sporadic and isolated.

The Gestapo offered a bounty to anyone who denounced Jews in hiding -- a quart of liquor, four pounds of sugar, a carton of cigarettes, or, at times, small cash payments. For wartime civilians subject to rationing, most commodities were unobtainable through normal channels, which provided a powerful incentive, apart from hostility toward Jews, to cooperate with the Gestapo. Anyone discovered hiding Jews was subject to *summary* execution. At a time when living space, food, sanitation facilities, and medicine were in short supply, rescuers sacrificed a great deal in addition to risking their lives.

Starting in January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, Nazi racial policy developed incrementally in stages:

1. In 1933 Jewish businesses were boycotted and Jews were banned from working in the arts and media.
2. 1933-35 ushered in a period of “legal” discrimination against Jews in the civil service and professions, i.e. law, medicine and education.
3. 1935-38 was characterized by passage of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with “Aryans;” and stripped of citizenship rights. Nazi policy focused on *Entjudung*, pressuring Jews to emigrate from Germany.
4. November, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, the first nation-wide (including Occupied Austria), coordinated and state-sponsored *pogrom* against Jews occurred, marking a new and sinister phase of Nazi racial policy. Hundreds of Jews were killed or injured, thousands more, mostly men, were sent to concentration camps; thousands of Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues were damaged or destroyed. It was the *first* act of mass violence against the Jewish community to be clearly orchestrated by the Nazi regime. Most historians mark the beginning of the Holocaust from November, 1938. (“*The beginning of the end and the end of the beginning*”)
5. 1942 ushered in the last and most devastating phase of Nazi racial policy, the “**Final Solution** to the Jewish question,” i.e. *industrialized* mass murder.

Catholics and Protestant shared in the pride of German **patriotism/nationalism** and in Germany's long tradition of **respect for authority**. *Extreme* patriotism and *excessive* respect for authority, however, became excuses for *blind* obedience\* to Nazi policies, even *morally* indefensible ones. At the **Nuremberg Trials** (1945-46), for example, an all too commonly heard refrain in defense of **war crime** charges was “*I was only following orders.*” **Charles Dubost**, a French prosecutor, in a statement before the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1946 said: “*(Germany) allowed itself to be robbed of its conscience and its very soul. Evil masters came who awakened its primitive passions and made possible the atrocities which I have described to you. In truth, the crime of these men is that they caused the German people to retrogress more than 12 centuries.*”

\*Obviously, not every Christian was blindly obedient. There were “*people of conscience.*” Many Jehovah Witnesses, for example, refused to obey and were targeted. One instance -- **Mary Smigiel**, a secretary in Poland, believing that only God deserved unquestioned praise and honor, refused her German boss' demand to type “Heil Hitler” on business correspondence. Her disobedience (an example of *passive resistance*) was reported to the Gestapo and she was sent to a Polish labor camp.

In deciding how to respond to Nazi racist policies, regrettably, most German (and European) Christians placed duty to obey *secular authority* higher than duty to obey *conscience*. **Jesus** taught his followers to “*render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.*” (**Matthew** 22:21) Too many ignored the distinction, however, and rendered *all* to the Nazi “Caesar.” Making matters worse, most church leaders, Catholic and Protestant alike, metaphorically speaking, the “*shepherds of the flock,*” failed to provide **moral leadership** to the *flock*.\* This is an underlying premise of **The Deputy**, Rolf Hochhuth's controversial play about Pius XII, see *supra*.

\*A Catholic priest who did set a prophetic example was **Fr. Max Josef Metzger** -- a WWI Germany army chaplain and founder of the *Peace Alliance of German Catholics*. During WWII he protested against Nazi racist policies. Arrested and condemned for high treason, he was executed in April, 1944. Another example is **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg**, see *infra*.

German churches as *institutions*, for the most part, remained passive in the face of Nazi racial policy. Unlike in 1941 when private and public protest against the Nazi regime's “*euthanasia*” policy for the mentally and physically disabled, \* spearheaded by Roman Catholic **Bishop Clemens von Galen**, succeeded in halting or, at least, drastically reducing those killings, there was little public outcry from churches when Jews were “*deported*” and no official condemnations when news of atrocities in the East reached Germany. (Von Galen was later sent to a concentration camp.) In an attempt to protect *institutional* self interest and to insure survival, the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches yielded to Nazi pressure that restricted many of their functions, closed religious schools, and sent the courageous few of their members who protested to concentration/death camps. The vast majority of clergy in order to avoid antagonizing

the regime chose *accommodation* over confrontation. The Vatican maintained its official wartime policy of “neutrality” despite the regime’s flagrant violation of the Reich Concordat, especially regarding protection of Jewish converts to Catholicism. (See for example, **Edith Stein**, saint and martyr)

\*“**Operation T-4**” the Nazi program begun in October, 1939 to eliminate *lebensunwertes Leben* (“the life unworthy of life.”) 70,000 to 80,000 people—including 4000-5000 Jews—were “*euthanized*.”

Historian **Gordon C. Zahn**, author of *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars*, writes: “...*the German Catholic who looked to his religious superiors for spiritual guidance and direction regarding service in Hitler’s wars received virtually the same answers he would have received from the Nazi ruler himself.*” Zahn, p. 17... “*To the extent that the Church accommodates itself to a secular regime, it becomes, in effect, an agent of that regime, supplementing the secular controls with those of the spiritual order.*” Ibid, p.216.

There was considerable sympathy among Catholic and Protestant clergy for Hitler’s conservative social values, and especially for his crusade against **Bolshevism**. Catholic and Protestant clergy viewed Bolshevism and Judaism as mortal enemies of Christianity. Some church leaders were demonstrably anti-Semitic. A pastoral letter written in 1941 by **Archbishop Konrad Grober**, for example, blamed Jews for the death of Jesus, and implied that their fate under National Socialism was not only justified but a “*self-imposed curse*.” Papal pronouncements protesting persecution referred, for the most part, to *non-Aryan* victims. Bishops spoke out against killings in the East, but most protested murder of “Christian” Poles and Slavs. Only a few clerics denounced killing Jews specifically.

German Christians generally agreed with Nazi goals. Most went along with the regime’s policy of anti-Semitism, perhaps reluctantly, because they were drawn to National Socialism. They were inspired by Hitler, **Der Fuhrer**, a charismatic and mesmerizing orator, who promised to restore social order and achieve Germany’s destiny as homeland of the Aryan “**Master Race**.” They welcomed his goal of stamping out **Judeo-Bolshevism**\* to counter liberal, anti-clerical and atheistic currents within the **Weimar Republic**. They welcomed his advocacy of a strong state, a strong leader, a new Reich that, following Germany’s humiliating defeat in WWI, would once again rise to be a world power.

\*Hitler, addressing the Reichstag on January 30 1939: “*Today I will once more be a prophet! If the international Jewish financiers inside and outside Europe should again succeed in plunging the nations into a world war, the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth and thus victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race throughout Europe.*”

German Christians, 94 percent of the population, were generally pleased with improving social, political and economic conditions within Germany; they applauded Hitler's foreign policy and other successes\* (e.g. breaking the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles; reoccupying the **Rhineland**; annexing **Alsace Lorraine**; the **Anschluss** with Austria; the bloodless takeover of the **Sudetenland**, then the takeover of all of **Czechoslovakia**.) Moreover, as happened so many times throughout history, Germans, like other Europeans, *scapegoated* Jews for catastrophic events, i.e. for Germany's defeat in WWI; the humiliating terms of the **Versailles Treaty**; the ensuing economic depression/hyper-inflation and political instability of the **Weimar Republic**. Sadly, because of their long history of Christian anti-Judaism, Nazi anti-Semitism resonated within them, numbing their consciences to Hitler's *eliminationalist* policy.

\*Hitler's foreign policy successes were in large measure due to a "*paralysis of will*" (to stop him) on the part of the victorious WWI allies. England and France, in particular, had suffered huge losses during the war. England lost 1 million soldiers dead; France lost 1.5 million dead with both countries suffering many more profoundly wounded. The "Great War" was supposed to be "*the war to end all wars.*" **Neville Chamberlain**, Prime Minister of Britain, declared there would be "*Peace in our time,*" as he attempted to appease Hitler's expansionist policy. France and England, also adversely affected by the Great Depression, therefore, sought to avoid another war with Germany at all costs. Capitalizing on their reluctance, Hitler engaged in ever more provocative actions until his invasion of Poland in September, 1939 finally went too far and a second world war became inevitable.

*Revisionist* historians claim that extreme racial hostility against Jews was limited to Nazi Germany; was thoroughly neo-pagan in origin; and did not affect the rest of the Christian world. The facts, however, do not support such conclusions. The Holocaust, after all, took place not only in Germany but in all of Western and Eastern Europe. Without the willing participation, complicity and *indifference* of non-German Christians, it could not have happened on such a massive scale. Moreover, anti-Semitism was pervasive outside Europe as well. The governments of **Great Britain**, **Canada** and the **United States**, for example, although aware of Nazi racial policies did not attempt to pressure Germany before the outbreak of war, diplomatically or politically, to stop the violence and killing; nor did any of them offer safe haven to Jewish refugees within their borders before or during the war. Though requested to do so, moreover, the Allies did not attempt military measures, such as bombing rail lines to the death camps, which would have, at least, temporally disrupted the *industrialized* killing process (begun in 1942). Most other countries likewise refused Jews entry as political refugees into their territorial boundaries, (see The **Evian Conference**, 1938)\*. Anti-Semitism was pervasive enough in these countries that most politicians were unwilling to be perceived as *pro-Jewish* or *pro-Zionist* (i.e. in favor of a Jewish homeland/state in Palestine).

\*Hitler and Goebbels interpreted this reluctance of countries outside Europe to offer refuge to Jews as license to *radicalize* Nazi racist

policy. They eventually concluded that widespread public *indifference* regarding the plight of Jews would provide them “cover” for the “Final Solution.”

Prominent Americans like **Fr. Charles Coughlin**,\* **Henry Ford**\*\* and **Charles Lindbergh**\*\*\* were anti-Semites.

\*Fr. Charles Coughlin, a U.S Catholic priest and avowed Nazi sympathizer, during the 1930s used the radio to reach a mass audience. Fond of quoting Joseph Goebbels, Coughlin once said during a radio broadcast: “*When we get through with the Jews in America, they'll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing.*”

\*\*Henry Ford, industrialist, serialized “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in his company newspaper, “The Dearborn Times.” He accepted the Third Reich’s medal of the Grand Cross of the German Eagle in 1938

\*\*\* Charles Lindbergh, famed aviator, also received a medal from the German government which, when asked to return by Jewish groups, he refused to do. He and his wife wrote laudatory books about Nazi Germany. Lindbergh, as a prominent member of the “**America First**” Committee, sought to prevent the U.S. from entering World War II on the side of England and against Germany.

On May 15, 1939, the Nazis allowed more than 900 Jews to leave Germany on the ocean liner *St. Louis*. Passengers carried what they believed to be valid permits guaranteeing them temporary stay until visas and permanent refuge in the United States could be secured. On arrival at the port of Havana, Cuba, only 29 were allowed to disembark. When the ship was ordered to leave the harbor, several passengers attempted suicide. For three days the liner cruised slowly off the U.S. coast, waiting for the U.S. government to allow entry to its passengers. In mid-June, after 35 days, the *St. Louis* was forced to return to Europe, where the governments of England, France, Holland, and Belgium finally agreed to divide the passengers among them. No doubt, at least, some of those who disembarked in France, Holland and Belgium probably did not survive the Holocaust.

Despite its commitment to humanitarian initiatives worldwide, the Switzerland-based **International Committee of the Red Cross** made only sporadic efforts to aid European Jewry. Similar to the Vatican policy position, Red Cross officials feared that public condemnation of Nazi atrocities could backfire and jeopardize the organization’s relief work on behalf of POW’s and civilian internees.

Europeans outside Germany, like those within, were generally *indifferent* toward Jewish mistreatment. They *too* had been conditioned by centuries of Christian **anti-Judaism** which *numbed* their consciences to this form of injustice. Thus ethically *desensitized*, most of them were, at least, tolerant of Nazi anti-Jewish policies, some even willing to take part in the killing. After Hitler’s armed forces invaded their countries,

resident **collaborators**, *including* clerics in the **Ukraine, Lithuania**, Yugoslavia (**Croatia**), **Poland** and **Hungary**, were particularly helpful. In **Vichy France**, Nazi leaders were surprised by the eagerness some French citizens displayed in trying to please their occupiers. Clearly, not *all* Christians were guilty of the Holocaust. There were Christians throughout Europe who, in accordance with the ideals of their faith, behaved *humanely* toward Jews, even to the point of risking their lives in **rescue** and **resistance**. As noted previously, however, their number was small in comparison to those who participated or looked the other way. Approximately 20,000 have been recognized for heroism as “**Righteous Gentiles**” by the Israeli government at **Yad Vashem** in Jerusalem, see *infra*.

**Daniel Jonah Goldhagen**, author of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, charges that totalitarian terrorism was not what brought about the *complicity* of ordinary Germans in the mass murder of Jews; rather their long history of *Jew hatred* led them willingly to assent to “*eliminationist anti-Semitism.*” Goldhagen further claims that deep traditions of anti-Jewish thought and action in the Church led it to a *morally* afflicted choice during World War II, namely “*that allowing or abetting the Germans’ and their helpers’ persecution of the Jews and even letting the Jews die was preferable to intervening on their behalf.*” **James Carroll**, author of *Constantine’s Sword, the Church and the Jews*, adds: “*The German Catholic hierarchy and clergy, in particular were guilty of a grievous moral failure.*” (Emphasis mine)

## II. Roman Catholics in Germany (1938-45)

### 1. The Reich Concordat

a. Before the signing of the **Reich Concordat** in 1933, some German bishops refused to administer the sacraments to Nazi officials (a form of excommunication) and warned the faithful about **National Socialism’s** racist policies. Until then, major Christian resistance to Hitler had come from Catholics, primarily through membership in the **Catholic Center Party**,\* founded in 1870 as a counterforce to anti-Catholic sentiment during **Bismarck’s** *Second Reich*. Relatively few Catholics voted for Hitler or Nazi party candidates during elections between 1930 and 1933. With the Church’s agreement in the Reich Concordat to refrain from political activity in Nazi Germany, in effect, disbanding the Center Party, Catholic political activity in Germany essentially ended. The German Catholic Church, thereafter, specifically the **Fulda Bishops’ Conference**, withdrew its prohibition against Catholic membership in the Nazi party and urged the faithful to be loyal and *obedient* to the new regime.

\*Members of the Catholic Center Party held the chancellorship in eight of the fourteen cabinets between 1918 and 1933. In 1931 **Karl Bachem**, historian of the Party, noted with pride, “*Never yet has a Catholic country possessed such a developed system of all conceivable Catholic associations as today’s Catholic*

*Germany.*”

b. The Church’s agreement not to “interfere” in *state* matters *constrained* Catholics from opposing Nazi racist policies. As treatment of Jews became more extreme, most clergy chose to remain *silent* rather than risk forfeiting church prerogatives “guaranteed” by the Reich Concordat. Although the Concordat “guaranteed” freedom from state interference in religious matters, the regime, routinely violated its terms, for example, by harassing church members, arresting Catholics on trumped-up morals charges, closing schools, closing down Catholic presses and restricting church welfare programs to the *racially* “fit.” The regime, moreover, routinely ignored church pleas made on behalf of Jewish converts to Catholicism\*.

\***Edith Stein**, Jewish convert to Catholicism in 1922, who became a nun in 1934, died in an Auschwitz gas chamber. She was canonized as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (her monastic name) by Pope John Paul II in 1998

c. Defending his refusal to condemn the April 1, 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses, **Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber**, Archbishop of Munich, declared that it was “*a matter of economics, of measures directed against an interest group which has no very close bond with the Church.*” In a letter addressed ... to then Vatican Secretary of State Pacelli, Faulhaber wrote: “*We bishops are being asked why the Catholic Church, as often in its history, does not intervene on behalf of the Jews. This is not possible at this time because the struggle against the Jews would then, at the same time, become a struggle against the Catholics, and because the Jews can help themselves, as the sudden end of the boycott shows.*”

During a homily in 1933, Faulhaber defended the Old Testament against Nazi assaults on Jewish Scripture, however, he declared that he was concerned only with “*Israel of biblical antiquity,*” not Jews alive in his own day. His secretary went so far as to say that the Cardinal “*had not taken a position with regard to the Jewish question of today.*” James Carroll, Practicing Catholic, p. 262

In a 1937 homily Cardinal von Faulhaber\* boasted about the extent to which the Church had legitimized and buttressed Nazism:

“*At a time when the heads of the major nations in the world faced the new Germany with cool reserve and considerable suspicion, the Catholic Church, the ‘greatest moral power on earth,’ through the Concordat expressed its confidence in the new German government. This was a deed of immeasurable significance for the reputation of the government abroad.*” (Emphasis mine)

\*Cardinal von Faulhaber ordained Joseph Ratzinger to the priesthood in 1951. Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, succeeded Faulhaber as archbishop of Munich. “*What’s moved me deeply*

*about him (Faulhaber),” Ratzinger wrote after the war, recalling his experience as a seminarian, “was the awe-inspiring grandeur of his mission, with which he had become full identified.” James Carroll writes that as Pope Benedict remains devoted to Faulhaber’s memory: “...this and numerous other statements on the subject show, Ratzinger remains equally devoted to the proposition that the German Catholic Church was a consistent center of resistance to the Nazis. Whatever accounts for Ratzinger’s memory, it is not true. What Catholic resistance showed itself in Germany was exceptional...” (Ibid, p.263)*

d. Some historians argue that at the heart of the German Catholic Church’s failure to speak out “*prophetically*,” before and during the Holocaust, was the notion that as an *institution* it was compelled to act in its own *narrowly* defined “best” interests. One historian suggests that there was little desire in Germany at the time for “heroism” or “self-sacrifice,” but great emphasis on “pragmatic” and “strategic” measures to safeguard institutional *autonomy* without antagonizing the regime or provoking schism among German Catholics. *Institutional* inaction in Rome and Berlin, sadly, provided clergy and laity with an excuse for *passivity* in the face of massive human suffering. **David Goldhagen** writes: “*The Church is legitimized as a **moral institution**, and its failings are defended by appealing to the constraints, real or invented, that it faced as a political institution.*” (Emphasis mine) *A Moral Awakening*, p.87.

## 2. Nationalism/ Patriotism

a. **Nationalism/patriotism**,\* coupled with the Reich Concordat’s restriction on political interference, the Vatican’s policy of wartime neutrality, anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism, and a Christian’s duty to obey authority, all combined to dissuade German Catholics from resisting the regime’s racist policies.

\* In September, 1939, following the invasion of Poland and beginning of WWII, German Catholic bishops issued a pastoral letter stating, in pertinent part:

*“In this decisive hour we admonish our Catholic soldiers to do their duty in obedience to the Fuehrer and be ready to sacrifice their whole individuality. We appeal to the faithful to join ardent prayers that the divine Providence of God Almighty may lead this war to blessed success and peace for our fatherland and nation.”*

b. In 1936, when the regime demanded that the **swastika** be *removed* from flags next to altars and church newspaper mastheads, some pastors protested, claiming the symbol was a key element in the religious life of their congregants.

c. Cardinal von Faulhaber declared in October 1943 that “*nobody in his heart can possibly wish an unsuccessful outcome of the war. Every reasonable person knows that*

*in such a case the State and the Church, and organized society altogether, would be overturned by the Russian chaos.”*

d. **Guenter Lewy** concludes that with the exception of **Bishop Konrad Preysing**, head of the German Bishops’ Conference, “*all German bishops until the very last days of the conflict called on the faithful to do their patriotic duty. This position, we may assume, represented sincerely felt loyalty to their country. The fact that Germany was ruled by the Nazis who harassed and persecuted the Church and were guilty of untold other crimes, made no difference.*” Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p.232.

e. **Gordon Zahn** adds: “*In World War II the leading spokesmen of the Catholic Church in Germany did become channels of Nazi control over their followers, whether by their exhortations to loyal obedience to legitimate authority, or by their even more direct efforts to rally those followers to the defense of Volk, Vaterland, and Heimat as a Christian duty.*” Zahn, German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars, p. 203.

### 3. Bishops

a. Disagreement existed within the German Bishops’ Conference regarding how to respond to Nazi racist policies. Most bishops were aware of atrocities taking place almost as soon as they began; moreover, they were certainly aware of the **Final Solution** by the end of 1942 and what it entailed. During and after the war some bishops, however, including **Cardinal Adolf Bertram**,\* and **Archbishop Konrad Grober**, denied knowing what was occurring in the death camps. To lend credence to his claimed ignorance, Cardinal Bertram cut off contact with the Jewish community. The Church, in Cardinal Bertram’s view, had to exercise *restraint* to avoid jeopardizing national unity and in order to fulfill its central role of administering the sacraments. Other bishops, not wanting to be branded unpatriotic, avoided contact with dissidents. “*No German bishop*,” declared **Archbishop Grober**, “*would want to bring harm to the “beloved Volk and Fatherland.*”

\* When in 1938 Cardinal Bertram addressed some 30,000 German Catholics in his Breslau diocese, he invoked Scripture on behalf of the regime: “*There is no need to urge you to give respect and obedience to the new authorities of the German state. You all know the words of the apostle: ‘Let every man be subject to the powers placed over him. (Romans 13:1)’*” (Emphasis mine)

In 1945 after Hitler’s suicide, Cardinal Bertram ordered a solemn requiem Mass be celebrated in commemoration of the Fuhrer.

At least two bishops spoke out *explicitly* against the Holocaust. Bishop **Konrad von Preysing**\* of Berlin chaired a group calling for vigorous opposition to the regime’s anti-Semitic policies. In November 1942, Bishop Preysing preached a homily on every person’s right to life, including Jews. The following month Cologne’s **Bishop Josef Frings** wrote a pastoral letter, cautioning the faithful not to violate the rights of others.

Speaking at the Cologne cathedral, he said ...“*No one may take the property or life of an innocent person just because he is a member of a foreign race.*” Both bishops were accused by the Gestapo of “attacking the state”.

\*In June 1940, after Cardinal Bertram sent Hitler a birthday letter assuring the Fuhrer of the sincere good wishes of his Catholic subjects, Bishop Preysing informed Pius XII of his inclination to resign as bishop. “*Pius XII, exhibiting the diplomatic skill for which he was known, did his best to conciliate all parties to the dispute. He resolutely rejected the idea of Preysing’s resignation, reassuring him of his full support, while at the same time he praised the leadership of Cardinal Bertram.*” (Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, Introduction, p.xx)

b. In August 1943, members of the **Kreisau Circle**, a Berlin resistance group, drafted a letter regarding Jewish deportations. Intended to be sent to Hitler under the signatures of all bishops, it read, in pertinent part:

*“With deepest sorrow – yes, even with holy indignation- have we German bishops learned of the deportation of non-Aryans in a manner that is scornful of human rights. It is our holy duty to defend the unalienable rights of all men guaranteed by natural law.... Shocking reports reach us regarding the awful, gruesome fate of the deported...”*

The draft letter made specific requests that included: humane living and working conditions; access to contact with friends and relatives; admission of chaplains and of a visitation committee into settlements and camps; a list of where deportees were detained; a list of all evacuees and an accounting of their whereabouts. The letter was *never* sent. It was rejected in favor of “*small successes*,” i.e. it was feared that taking public action would make it more difficult for *rescuers* hiding Jews.

#### 4. Priests

a. Priests in Nazi Germany were not only clerics subject to their diocesan bishop, but also civil servants subject to state regulation. Consequently when it was mandated in July 1933 that civil servants offer the “Heil Hitler” salute, priests were compelled to comply. Among Catholic clergy there existed various levels of acceptance and rejection of regime policies:

- A few heroic priests challenged National Socialism and its anti-Semitic ideology and paid with their lives.\*

\*For example, **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg**, a priest at the St. Hedwig Cathedral Church in Berlin, one of only a few German clergymen to speak out against the Nazi regime. He joined **Archbishop Clemens August Graf von Galen** of Munster in opposing “euthanasia” measures ( the “T-4 program”) and openly

prayed for the well-being of Jews. Fr. Lichtenberg was arrested and died on his way to Dachau. In July, 2004, Fr. Lichtenberg was recognized as one of the *Righteous among the Nations* at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, see *infra*. He was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II.

- Approximately 140 priests, on the other hand, actively promoted National Socialism (so called “**brown priests**”<sup>\*</sup> – brown being the official color of the Nazi movement). These priests, some of whom were members of the Nazi party, embraced Hitler’s policies and his *Weltanschauung* (worldview).

*\*For example, Fr. Richard Kleine, who said: “Since I was a child a burning love for my German Volk and fatherland has been part of me... the relationship between the church and Germany has been especially important to me. I am one of those who firmly believed that the National Socialist movement stood for the national and social future of my Volk and was altogether the superior alternative to the Communist-Bolshevist ideology. I trusted... that Christian presence and cooperation in this movement could enhance Christian thought.”*

b. Priests were among chaplains assigned to minister to the spiritual needs of the German military. Here’s what Daniel Goldhagen writes about the practice:\*

*\*”What about the hundreds of German priests serving the German army and occupation forces in eastern Europe, who were in the thick of killing operations, holding services for and hearing the confessions of the killers?*

*Did they see Jews as innocent and the mass slaughtering of Jews as wrong? Did the priests tell the many Catholics among the hundreds of thousands of Germans participating in the mass annihilation that they were sinning? The evidence strongly suggests that they did not. If they had viewed the killing of the Jews as a crime and a sin, then we would in all likelihood know about such a view and of their initiatives among the perpetrators, because it has been the practice of the Church to put forward any evidence that would cast a favorable light upon itself. The testimony that does exist is not heartening. Of an estimated one thousand Catholic and Protestant clergy serving as military chaplains, fewer than ten cases (most are Catholic priests) have come to light - some of which are dubious - where it can be said that the chaplains conveyed disapproval of or urged resistance to the mass murder. . .*

*That Catholic priests in the thick of the mass murder greeted the annihilation of the Jews with silence or worse should come as no surprise, since the Catholic military bishop, **Franz Justus Rarkowski**, the spiritual*

*leader of the priests assigned to the Wehrmacht, was deeply Nazified.”*  
(Emphasis mine) (Goldhagen, A Moral Reckoning, pp.62-63)

c. The greatest perceived threat to social order in Germany during the 1930's was **Bolshevism**, which was likewise viewed as a mortal threat to the Church's existence. Hitler's goal to eradicate Bolshevism, therefore, resonated with Catholics, particularly church leaders. That Jews were frequently members of the Communist Party or communist sympathizers fed the flames of anti-Semitism.\*

\* Hitler railed against “**Judeo-Bolshevism**,” linking the two together.

d. After April, 1933, only German citizens who could prove their Aryan lineage were permitted to hold public service jobs. In most instances this required documentation from church records. An historian writes: “*The Church co-operated as a matter of course, complaining only that priests already overburdened with work were not receiving compensation for this special service to the state. The very question of whether the Church should lend its help to the Nazi state in sorting out people of Jewish descent was never debated. . . And the co-operation of the Church in this matter continued right through the war years, i.e. from 1933 through 1945, when the price of being Jewish was no longer dismissal from a government job and loss of livelihood, but deportation and outright physical destruction.*” (Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 282)

e. An official publication of the Bavarian priests' association declared in a January 1936 that the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were “essential” for the well-being of the German people.

## 5. Laity

a. Hatred or, at least hostility, as noted previously, was a powerful motivator of anti-Jewish behavior. Since childhood, for example, German Catholics had been taught the **decide** libel that Jews are “*collectively responsible*” for killing Jesus. Nazi propaganda portrayed Jews as *sub-human* polluters of the Aryan race who threatened the destiny of the fatherland. Anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism, masterfully exploited by Nazi propaganda, coupled with excessive patriotism and blind obedience to authority created a *lethal* mindset, as chillingly portrayed in statements of two notorious, albeit amoral, Nazi perpetrators:

**Rudolf Hoess**, commandant of Auschwitz, asserted: “*I personally arranged on orders from Himmler in May 1941, the gassing of two million persons between June-July 1941 and the end of 1943.*” In his autobiography, Hoess, a baptized Catholic, wrote of his religious upbringing, of his intent to become a priest. Repeatedly he referred to his duty to obey orders, to carry out commands without question. “*I can still remember how my father, who on account of his fervent Catholicism was a determined opponent of the Reich government and its policy, never ceased to remind his friends that, however*

*strong one's opposition might be, the laws and decrees of the state had to be obeyed **unconditionally.***\* (Emphasis mind)

\*Jesus taught his disciples to *love* unconditionally!

**Joseph Goebbels**, Nazi propaganda chief, opined: “*Christ is the genius of love, as such the most diametrical opposite of Judaism, which is the incarnation of hate. The Jew is a non-race among the races of the earth.... Christ is the first great enemy of the Jews.... that is why Judaism had to get rid of him. For he was shaking the very foundations of its future international power. The Jew is the lie personified. When he crucified Christ, he crucified everlasting truth for the first time in history.*”

## 6. The “Final Solution”

a. The “**Final Solution**,” Nazi Germany’s plan for the systematic *genocide* of all of **European Jewry**, began the final and most deadly phase of the Holocaust (Shoah). **Heinrich Himmler** (a Catholic) was chief architect of the plan, which **Hitler** (a Catholic) termed: “*the final solution of the Jewish question*”

When the Final Solution was fully implemented in late 1942, with death camps in place mostly in Poland, the “industrialized” mass murder of Jews began in earnest. The official decision to *systematically* eliminate European Jewry was made at the **Wannsee Conference** in early 1942, chaired by **Reinhard Heydrich** (a Catholic), acting under the authority given him by **Reichsmarshal Göring** (a Protestant) in a letter dated July 31, 1941. Göring instructed Heydrich to settle “...*the solution of the Jewish problem...*” During the conference, there was discussion on how best to handle the “*Final Solution of the Jewish Question*”. A surviving copy of the minutes of this meeting was found by the Allies in 1947, too late to serve as evidence during the first **Nuremberg Trials**.

## III. Roman Catholics outside Germany

**Scope:** The Holocaust began in Germany in November, 1938 (**Kristallnacht**) but spread like wildfire. Under Hitler’s **Weltanschauung** (“worldview”), *hegemony* over the entire European continent was Germany’s rightful destiny. To achieve this, he would have to vitiate the Versailles Treaty and the system that created it. Accordingly, his actions between 1933 and 1939 were directed at undoing the Treaty, including withdrawing from the **League of Nations**; consolidating power within a brutally totalitarian dictatorship; re-arming militarily; and positioning Germany to launch a drive for **Lebensraum** (“living space”) in the East. The implementation of this policy and, in particular, the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 led Europe and the world into war. Hitler’s ultimate goal was to create an economically *independent* **Greater German Reich**, based on the *slave* labor of “inferior” people like the Slavs.\*

\* Slavic peoples include... Czechs, Moravians, Poles, Sorbs, Belarusians, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Slovenes.

Hitler's race policy was intertwined with his goal to create "living space" for the German people and his attempt to stamp out Judaism and Bolshevism. For Hitler, it was Germany's historic duty to defeat *Judeo-Bolshevism* and its conspiracy of world domination, thereby saving Western civilization from atheistic communism and the "pernicious" influence of Jews. Accordingly, Hitler, a charismatic leader, gifted orator and masterful manipulator of propaganda, capitalized on the two greatest fears of Europeans -- Bolshevism and Jews. War in the East, therefore, was portrayed not only a campaign to gain territory, but also a *crusade* against the two greatest threats to Europe.

In his campaign to "eliminate" European Jewry,\* as his territorial control expanded into Western and Eastern Europe where, as in Germany, anti-Semitism was pervasive (particularly so in Eastern Europe), Hitler found thousands of willing accomplices. These accomplices, regrettably, included Catholic laity and clergy. Indigenous police forces in **France** and the **Netherlands**, for example, participated in roundups. **Hungarian** army troops and fascist extremists joined the hunt and helped slaughter thousands of Jews. Slovakia's **Hlinka Guard**, modeled after Nazi Storm Troopers, persecuted Jews while local police organized deportations. The *Ustasa*, a Croatian nationalist organization, engaged in torture and execution. In Croatia, not only were Jews murdered, but also Orthodox Catholic Serbs and Gypsies. In Poland **90%** of Polish Jews were murdered, but so too were 3 million Polish Catholics. In **Romania** and the **Crimea**, the "enthusiasm" of volunteer ethnic German and Romanian army units which took part in mass shootings surprised even the **SS**.

\*Initially, Hitler's policy toward Jews consisted of forcibly "encouraging" them to emigrate from Germany. When it became clear that other countries were not interested in accepting them as refugees in sufficient numbers, "solution of the Jewish problem" took on a more *ominous* connotation.

When the mobile killing squads of the *Einsatzgruppen* entered Eastern Europe, their comparatively thin ranks were augmented by auxiliary troops of native **Estonians**, **Latvians**, **Lithuanians**, and **Ukrainians**. Estonian police rounded up the Jews of Tallinn and helped the Nazis shoot hundreds. Latvian police assisted in the killing of thousands in Riga. Lithuanian police seized and executed Jews, while Lithuanian nationalists killed thousands in *pogroms*. The particularly brutal *Hilfspolizei*, Ukrainian auxiliary police, hunted down Jews escaping from ghettos, killing thousands.\* In short, without the willing participation of tens of thousands of Christians, including, most notoriously, **Jozef Tiso**, Roman Catholic priest and fascist leader of the **Slovakia** ; **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic** and **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac** of **Croatia**, all of whom were convicted of war crimes after the war (Tiso and Filipovic were executed), the Holocaust could not have been so diabolically successful.

\*Days after the German Army captured Kiev (Ukraine), the bloodiest shooting massacre of the Holocaust took place on the outskirts of that city. Over the course of two days in September 1941, *Einsatzgruppen* and Ukrainian Security Police slaughtered more than 33,000 of Kiev's Jews at a ravine called **Babi Yar**. The perpetrators showed no mercy for the elderly, women or even children. The Nazis believed it especially important to murder children, who represented, in their minds, the future of the Jewish "race."

There were, of course, Christians who engaged in **resistance** and **rescue**, but, unfortunately, their numbers were relatively few. As noted previously, anti-Semitism was particularly widespread and intractable in Eastern Europe, where most Jews resided. Church leaders outside Germany, by and large, were *passive* with only a handful willing to provide moral guidance for their flocks. Most rescuers shared three traits in common – 1) a clear sense of right and wrong; 2) courage to stand on their own; and 3) refusal to follow unjust orders. The fewer the number of *bystanders* in a particular country, the greater the likelihood of increased Jewish survival.

By the summer of 1942, notwithstanding that hundreds of thousands of Jews had already been murdered by death squads (*Einsatzgruppen*), mobile killing vans, and in pogroms, "**Operation Reinhard**" (the **Final Solution**) began and the capacity and pace of extermination *intensified*. In a speech at the **Posen Conference** on October 6, 1943, Himmler explained precisely what the "**Final Solution**" entailed. The frenzied pace of killing continued even after it became apparent that Nazi Germany would lose the war.

## 1. Roman Catholics in Yugoslavia (Croatia)

### Clerics as Willing Accomplices

a. Incredibly, clerics of the Croatian Roman Catholic Church, from *priests* to a *cardinal*, were among the willing accomplices of mass murder, not only of Jews, but also of **Serbs** (Orthodox Catholics), and **Gypsies** (Roma). From 1941 until 1945, the Nazi-installed regime of **Ante Pavelic**\* carried out some of the most horrific crimes of the Holocaust, killing over 800,000 Yugoslav citizens - 750,000 Serbs, 60,000 Jews and 26,000 Gypsies. In these crimes, the *Ustasha*, Croatia's radical fascist movement, was supported by **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac**, Archbishop of Zagreb.

\* Soon after the new fascist state of Croatia was created in May 1941, Pavelic's reign of terror began. **John Cornwell** describes what took place:

*"(It was) an act of 'ethnic cleansing' before that hideous term came into vogue, it was an attempt to create a 'pure' Catholic Croatia by enforced conversions, deportations, and mass exterminations. So dreadful*

*were the acts of torture and murder that even hardened German troops registered their horror. Even by comparison with the recent bloodshed in Yugoslavia at the time of writing (1999), Pavelic's onslaught against the Orthodox Serbs remains one of the most appalling civilian massacres known to history" (Cornwell, Hitler's Pope, p 249) (Emphasis mine)*

### **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic executed for War Crimes**

b. Many victims of the Pavelic regime were killed in **Jasenovac**, a death camp where over 200,000 people - mainly Orthodox Catholic Serbs died. Several members of the clergy were involved in the killing– notably **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic**,\* a Franciscan priest and one of the *commandants* of the camp, who was *hanged* for war crimes (wearing his cleric robes) after the war. Some 240,000 people were “*rebaptized*” into the Roman Catholic faith by fundamentalist clerics in “the Catholic Kingdom of Croatia” as part of the Pavelic regime’s policy to “*kill a third, deport a third, convert a third*” (of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies in Bosnia and Croatia).

After the war Filipovic admitted that he had personally killed about 100 prisoners and had attended mass executions of many more. He estimated that under his command some 20-30,000 prisoners were liquidated at Jasenovac. Prisoners were often made to stand in trenches where each was killed with a sledgehammer blow.

c. When the Nazis installed the *Ustasha* government in May 1941, Cardinal Stepinac offered congratulations to Pavelic, hosting a banquet to celebrate the new regime. Following the inaugural session of the Ustasha parliament, Pavelic attended a Mass in Zagreb’s cathedral, where Cardinal Stepinac offered special prayers and ordered that a solemn “Te Deum” to be sung in thanksgiving for regime. In May 1941, while Pavelic was in Rome to sign a treaty with Mussolini, Cardinal Stepinac arranged to have Pavelic received personally by Pius XII. Stepinac then issued a pastoral letter ordering Croatian clergy to support the new Ustasha State. In the same year, Stepinac declared:

*“God, who directs the destiny of nations and controls the hearts of Kings, has given us Ante Pavelic and moved the leader of a friendly and allied people, Adolf Hitler, to use his victorious troops to disperse our oppressors... Glory be to God, our gratitude to Adolf Hitler and loyalty to Ante Pavelic.”*

d. Cardinal Stepinac, Vatican appointed primate of Croatia, urged that Jews *and* Orthodox Catholic Serbs be *removed* from Croatian society. He contended, among other things, that Jews were *pornographers*; and Jewish doctors were the primary perpetrators of abortion. In May 1941 an article entitled “Why Are the Jews Persecuted?” appeared in **Bishop Ivan Saric**’s diocesan newspaper. It explained:

*“The descendants of those who hated Jesus, persecuted him to death, crucified him and persecuted his disciples, are guilty of sins greater than (those of) their forebears. Jewish greed increases. The Jews have*

*led Europe and the world towards disaster—moral and economic disaster. Their appetite grows till only domination of the world will satisfy it...Satan aided them in the invention of Socialism and Communism. There is a limit to love. The movement of liberation of the world from the Jews is a movement for the renewal of human dignity. Omniscient and omnipotent God stands behind this movement.”*

e. Vatican knowledge of the Pavelic regime’s racist policies is documented.\* Cardinal Stepinac himself headed up the committee responsible for forcible “conversions” of Orthodox Catholic Serbs and served as *Supreme Military Apostolic Vicar* of the Ustashi Army, responsible for killing those unwilling to convert. Stepinac, known as “Father Confessor” of the Ustashi, regularly bestowed his blessing upon Ustashi members.

\***John Cornwell** charges that from the beginning of the Pavelic regime, the Vatican knew what was happening in Croatia. In May 1941, Cornwell points out, Pius XII greeted Pavelic during a “devotional” audience in Rome. At that time, the Vatican granted *de-facto* recognition of the Pavelic regime, as a “*bastion against communism*”- despite the fact that the Vatican still had diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia. Cornwell further charges that from the start, Pavelic was known to be a “*totalitarian dictator*,” a “*puppet of Hitler and Mussolini*,” who *promulgated* racist and anti-Semitic legislation, and that he was “*bent on enforced conversions from Orthodox to Catholic Christianity*.”

f. The Vatican, as noted *supra*, assisted Nazi war criminals to escape prosecution at the end of the war, including Ante Pavelic and two hundred of his advisors, who fled to Argentina via “**ratlines**,” (safe-flight routes). Escapees frequently hid in church cloisters, often disguised as monks. Pavelic himself escaped disguised as a Catholic priest.

### **Cardinal Stepinac convicted of War Crimes**

g. After the war, Cardinal Stepinac was accused of **war crimes**: 1) collaboration with the Nazis; 2) collaboration with the “genocidal” Pavelic puppet regime; 3) having chaplains in the Ustasa army as religious agitators; 3) forceful conversions of Serb Orthodox to Catholicism at gunpoint; and 4) high treason against the Yugoslav government) After a trial in Zagreb, Stepinac was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison.\* Prosecution witnesses testified in October, 1946, among other things, that a group of *priests* armed with pistols sought to convert or kill Orthodox Catholic Serbs. One witness testified that 650 Serbs were stabbed or beaten to death in a church. Specifically, Stepinac was convicted of *collaboration* with and glorifying the Pavelic regime in the Catholic press, pastoral letters, and speeches. He died under house arrest in 1960.

\* The trial was condemned by the Vatican. All Catholics who had taken part in the court proceedings, including most of the jury members,

were excommunicated by Pius XII who referred to the process as the “saddest trial” (“*tristissimo processo*”).

## 2. Roman Catholics in Slovakia

### Fr. Josef Tiso executed for War Crimes

a. **Fr. Jozef Tiso**, a Roman Catholic priest and fascist leader of the Slovakia, was convicted and hanged as a **war criminal** after the war. Tiso claimed, it was “*a Christian act to expel Jews so that Slovakia could free itself of ‘its pests.’*” **Monsignor Domenico Tardini**, one of two undersecretaries in the Vatican’s Secretariat of State, aware of the situation in Slovakia, warned in an internal Vatican memo dated April 7, 1943, that if the Vatican failed to disassociate itself from the mass murder taking place in Slovakia (for over a year), it might not be able to avoid being *blamed* for it.

Slovakian Catholic **bishops** issued a pastoral letter justifying deportation of Jews, declaring: “*the influence of the Jews (has) been pernicious. In a short time they have taken control of almost all the economic and financial life of the country. Not only economically, but also in the cultural and moral spheres, they have harmed our people. The Church cannot be opposed, therefore, if the state with legal regulations hinders the dangerous influence of the Jews.*”

According to **Daniel Jonah Goldhagen**, Slovakia and Croatia are the “*most striking cases of Catholic bishops and priests lending a hand to mass murder.*” Goldhagen writes, “*A priest was the country’s president. An avowedly Catholic party governed the country, seeking to mold it according to Catholic principles. Many priests served in the country’s legislature, which voted, as did all its legislator priests, to deport the country’s Jews to their deaths. The Slovakian clergy, like other clergy, were under the discipline of the Pope. He had absolute authority over them. He could have commanded them to desist from acting in ways that violated the Church’s doctrine and practices. Yet he did not command them not to deport their country’s Jews to their deaths.*” Goldhagen, *A Moral Awakening*, pp 159-60)

### Slovakia – first Axis partner to consent to Deportations

b. Approximately 88,950 Jews resided in Slovakia. In March 1942, President Tiso signed an agreement with Nazi Germany permitting their deportation to death camps. Slovakia became the *first* Axis partner to *consent* to deportation. Between March and October 1942, Slovak police, assisted by Slovak military personnel, units of the fascist Slovak **People’s Party’s** paramilitary organization, the **Hlinka Guard**, and members of the Slovak ethnic German paramilitary formation ***Freiwillige Schutzstaffel*** turned over some 57,000 Slovak Jews for transport to the death camps of **Auschwitz**, **Majdanek** and **Sobibor**. Only 300 Jews survived. Among them were **Alfred Wetzler** and **Walter Rosenberg** (alias Rudolf Vrba), who escaped from Auschwitz in the spring of 1944 and compiled the first detailed report on operations at Auschwitz for general dissemination in the West.

From September to December 1944, another 12,600 Slovak Jews were deported, mostly to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. German and **Hlinka Guard** units killed a few thousand caught hiding or fighting with partisans. In all, more than 70,000 Jews were deported from Slovakia, **14%** survived.

### 3. Roman Catholics in Poland

#### Poland – the biggest “killing field”

a. In 1939, **Poland** had the highest concentration of Jews in Europe, approximately *10%* of the population. Polish Jews, among European Jews, were the least assimilated, and most conspicuous in appearance. In Warsaw, Jews made up about 65 per cent of Polish Communist Party membership. Over 90% of Poles were Roman Catholics. The **Warsaw Ghetto** with a residency of 400,000 Jews was established in October, 1940. About 30 percent of Warsaw’s population lived in *deplorable* conditions in about 2.4% percent of the city’s land space. Hitler’s invasion of Poland\* on September 1, 1939 marked the beginning of WWII.

\* In a speech delivered on the eve of the invasion, Hitler reputedly said: “*Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?*” He was referring to the **genocide** that began in 1915, where 1.5 million Armenians were killed during deportations from Turkey. Today, Turkey’s national government *denies* that what happened to the Armenians was genocide.

#### Cardinal August Hlond

b. In a 1936 pastoral letter, **Bishop August Hlond** urged Polish Catholics to *boycott* Jewish businesses:

*“...It is a fact that Jews oppose the Catholic Church, are steeped in free-thinking, and represent the avant-garde of the atheist movement, the Bolshevik movement, and subversive action. The Jews have a disastrous effect on morality and their publishing-houses dispense pornography. It is true that Jews commit fraud, usury, and are involved in trade in human beings. It is also true that the influence of Jewish young people on their Catholic peers is generally, on the religious and ethical level, a negative one. But we must be fair. Not all Jews are like this. There are very many Jewish faithful who are honest, just, compassionate, and charitable.”*

Also in 1936, Bishop Hlond stated: “*There will be the Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain.*” (...which some people understood to mean “*unless and until the Jews are eliminated.*”) Cornwell, Hitler's Pope, p. 280

In 1939, Bishop Hlond spent several months in Rome during the conclave of 1939 that elected Pope Pius XII. In January 1940, Vatican Radio broadcast Hlond's reports of

German persecution of Jews and Catholic clergy in Poland. These reports were included in the report of the Polish government to the Nuremberg Trials after the war.

In August 1941 Bishop Hlond reported to Vatican Secretary of State Maglione that the Polish people believed Pope Pius XII had *abandoned* them. This was said in light of Nazi persecution of the Polish church and clergy. Hlond was appointed Cardinal Primate of Poland in 1946.

### Polish Collaborators and Rescuers

c. Poles witnessed the Holocaust up close and personal. Most death camps were located on Polish soil because Poland had the largest concentration of Europe's Jews. Hitler decided against locating death camps in Germany so as not to *offend* German "sensibilities." Many Poles, as elsewhere in Europe, were indifferent toward the suffering of Jews; but others *emphasized* with them. As elsewhere in Europe, there were local *collaborators*, *sympathizers*, and many *bystanders*, but also "*people of conscience*"\* who engaged in **resistance** and **rescue**. The humanity of these "people of conscience" is, in deed, remarkable because ethnic Poles were deemed "racially inferior," and, therefore, subject to Nazi persecution as well. Moreover, the penalty for helping a Jew was summary execution.

\* One example of a Polish woman "of conscience" (honored as a "Righteous Gentile," see *infra*.) is **Irena Sendler**, who smuggled 2500 Jewish infants and children out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Eventually discovered, Gestapo thugs fractured both of her legs and arms during a vicious beating. Sendler kept a record of the children she saved. After the war, attempting to reunite children with their families, she tried to locate surviving parents, but most parents did not survive. Sendler then worked to have orphaned children placed for adoption with foster families.

Only 10 % of Polish Jews survived, yet, Poland accounts for over 5,900\* "Righteous Gentiles." The **Yad Vashem** holocaust museum in Jerusalem honors the "**Righteous among Nations**, -- men and women of "*compassion, courage and morality*" and who "*risked their lives to save the lives of Jews.*"

\*Poland ranks first among 40 countries, almost one-third of the total.

d. Polish *nuns* were especially active in the rescue of Jewish children, sheltering them in their convents and schools.

Additionally, a group of Catholic activists was instrumental in establishing **Zegota**, the *only* organization formed in Nazi-occupied Europe for the specific purpose of Jewish rescue. Members of Zegota placed over 2000 children in homes, convents, and orphanages in the Warsaw area.

**Archbishop Adam Szeptycki** of Lvov, see *infra*, like certain other bishops in Europe, urged priests of his diocese to provide fake baptismal certificates for Jewish children in hiding. Polish bishops, for the most part, however, remained *passive* during the Holocaust. Three councils of Polish bishops took place during the German occupation, for example, and none of them issued a statement even alluding to the mass murder taking place on Polish soil. Correspondence between Polish bishops and the Vatican contain little expression of concern over the plight of Jews.

e. Approximately 3 million Polish Jews were murdered (especially at **Treblinka**, **Chelmno**, **Majdanek**, **Belzec** and **Sobibor** and **Auschwitz**). Some Jews perished from starvation and disease in overcrowded ghettos or were executed before reaching death camps. The total number of Jews killed in Poland, however, was higher as many were deported to extermination camps located there from elsewhere in Europe. In particular, Jews from France, Greece, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany were murdered at Auschwitz. This raises the grand total to over 4 million exterminated in Poland -- country with the Nazis' biggest "*killing field*."

It is important to note that a total of **six** million *Polish* citizens were murdered, 20% of its population: three million Jews and three million Christians, mostly *Roman Catholics*.

#### 4. Roman Catholics in Lithuania

a. In Nazi-occupied **Lithuania**, a predominately Roman Catholic country, of approximately 210,000 Lithuanian Jews, 195,000 *perished* -- only 10% survived. As occurred elsewhere in Eastern Europe, local auxiliaries and the Lithuanian Security Police carried out executions under Nazi direction. In June, 1941 a rogue unit of insurgents headed by **Algirdas Klimaitis** instigated anti-Jewish *pogroms* in Kaunas (Kovno) with over a thousand Jews killed in the first to be carried out. Nazi commanders filed reports noting that the "*zeal of the Lithuanian police battalions surpassed their own*." The most notorious Lithuanian unit was a *Sonderkommando* squad from the Vilnius area which killed tens of thousands of Jews, Poles and others.

b. As in other occupied and Axis allied countries, not all Lithuanians supported Nazi genocidal policy. Out of a population of approximately 3,000,000 (80% ethnic Lithuanians), only a few thousand took active part in the Holocaust, while many hundreds risked their lives to shelter Jews. 723 Lithuanians have been recognized as "Righteous Gentiles."

c. **Sempo Sugihara**, the Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania, was a hero of the Holocaust. He rescued several thousand Jews stranded in Lithuania after they fled Nazi-occupied Poland. Defying his government, he granted transit visas to Japan for at least 3500. The Japanese government cited Sugihara for insubordination and stripped him of his diplomatic post.

## 5. Roman Catholics in France

a. Before WWII began, France was one of the more accommodating countries in Europe to welcome Jewish refugees from Poland, Romania, and Germany. When Germany defeated France in June 1940, there were approximately 350,000 Jews there, more than half of them German refugees. The French government signed an armistice in June 1940 under the terms of which, northern France came under German occupation; the eastern provinces of **Alsace** and **Lorraine** (taken from Germany under the Versailles treaty) were annexed to Germany. Southern France remained “*unoccupied*” and was governed by a French administration under the leadership of **Marshal Henri Philippe Petain**.\* The Petain regime, its capital in the town of **Vichy**, declared itself “neutral,” but, in reality, it *collaborated* closely with Nazi Germany.

\*After the war, Petain was tried and convicted of war crimes

b. In 1940, the Vichy government promulgated anti-Jewish legislation, the “**Statut des Juifs**,” patterned after the **Nuremberg Laws**. The legislation excluded Jews from public life; required their dismissal from positions in the civil service, the army, commerce, and industry; and barred them from participation in the professions, including medicine, law, and education. The French Roman Catholic Church issued no public protest.

In July 1941, the Vichy government inaugurated an extensive program of “Aryanization,” among other things, confiscating Jewish-owned property. Thousands were sent to “internment” camps, such as **Gurs** near the Spanish border. 4,000 were deported from Gurs to Auschwitz. Elsewhere in France, internment camps were located in **Saint-Cyprien**, **Rivesaltes**, **Le Vernet**, and **Les Milles**.

**Bishop Delay** of Marseilles remarked:

*“We do not ignore the fact that the Jewish question poses difficult national and international problems. We are well aware that our country has the right to take all appropriate steps to defend itself against those who, especially in recent years, have done her so much harm and to punish those who abuse the hospitality that has so liberally been extended to them.”*

d. Preparations began in early 1942 to include Western European Jews in the **Final Solution**. Deportations from France started that summer with French police responsible for rounding ups. In mid-July 1942, 13,000 Jews were seized in Paris and interned for several days in the **Velodrome d'Hiver** sports arena. They were held there without food or water until transport to Auschwitz. Throughout France, Jews were assembled in camps, loaded onto cattle cars, and sent to the **Drancy** transit camp northeast of Paris. More than 60 separate transports left Drancy during 1942. Most of them went to Auschwitz. Drancy served as the last stop before death for at least 62,000 Jews.

Thousands of Jews fled to the southeast corner of France after Mussolini's army occupied territory east of the Rhone River in late 1942. Italian authorities refused to hand over Jews to the Germans, despite repeated demands to do so. While many Jews in the Italian zone were rounded up by the Nazis after September 1943, thousands managed to hide or to escape to Switzerland.

e. The last deportation from France to Auschwitz took place in August 1944. Over 77,000 Jews deported from France were murdered in Nazi death camps. Of these, one-third were French citizens and over 8,000 were children under the age of thirteen. 75% of Jews in France survived. The high survival rate was attributable to a number of factors, including dispersal of Jews in many localities, minimal German police presence, and *relatively few bystanders*.

The Allied landing in **Normandy** in northwestern France on June 6, 1944, began the liberation of Europe.

f. On February 17, 2009, France's highest court issued a ruling recognizing the French state's responsibility in the deportation of tens of thousands of Jews during WWII. Citing "*mistakes*" made by the collaborationist Vichy regime, the court said the government's share of blame was clear in acts which had not been forced on it by the occupiers and which "*allowed or facilitated the deportation from France of victims of anti-Semitism.*" The ruling marks the first time any French court has acknowledged the Vichy government's role in Nazi-era atrocities.

Calling for a "*formal admission of the state's responsibility and of the prejudice collectively suffered*", the court wrote that acts such as the arrest, internment and dispatching of Jews to transit camps were clear indicators of the government's guilt. It added "*As they led to the deportation of people considered Jewish by the Vichy regime, the acts and activities of the state ... became its responsibility.*"\*

\*"*It is a decision with which I am content,*" **Serge Klarsfeld**, the leading French historian of the Holocaust, told a reporter from Le Figaro. "*France is showing now that she is at the forefront of countries which are confronting their past, which was not the case even in the 1990s... For decades after the war, the suffering of French Jews at the hands of their countrymen was buried, along with the shame of collaboration, at the back of national consciousness.*" **François Mitterrand**, president from 1981 until 1995, insisted France "*was never involved*" in mistreatment of its Jewish population. Not until Mitterrand's successor, **Jacques Chirac** in 1995 was there an admission of France's "*inescapable guilt.*"

## 6. Roman Catholics in Hungary

a. The destruction of **Hungarian** Jewry is one of the saddest chapters in the story of the Holocaust. At a time when German armies were being routed in the East and the ultimate fate of the Nazis was being sealed by the successful Allied invasion at

Normandy on June 6, 1944; when much of European Jewry had already been destroyed; and when world leaders had *undisputed* knowledge of what was happening in the death camps, 500,000 Hungarian Jews were exterminated in a “*killing frenzy that kept Auschwitz’s crematoria burning night and day.*” Jews in Hungary, for the most part, had been spared because, although allied with Germany, the Hungarian government resisted Nazi requests to deport Jews. When in March 1944 Germany invaded and occupied Hungary, however, Jews were left unprotected and became easy prey for **Adolf Eichmann’s** “killing machine.” The “killing frenzy” began in mid-May 1944 and was over in July, two months later.

### Priests and Laity

b. One reason mass killing occurred with little or resistance in Hungary was its long history of anti-Semitism. 66% of the population was Roman Catholic. In the first six weeks of German occupation, Hungarians made over 35,000 “denunciations” against Jews. For years hostility toward Jews had been encouraged from the pulpit and in the Catholic and secular press. In a 1939 editorial appearing in the fascist party newspaper the “**Arrow-Cross,**” a priest wrote:

*“In places where priests are murdered, the educated are slaughtered, and churches are burnt—that’s where the Jew is to be found. Even if no Jew is actually there in a physical sense, his presence is represented there by his venomous literary works. Like naked spirits they drift all over the world, and by means of their filthy moral concepts, their distorted philosophy, and their base artistic schools, they spread their revolting ideas. Their sullied views corrupt the world.”*

Another priest, writing at the height of the killing frenzy, wrote that “*Ever since the Jews crucified Jesus, they have been the foes of Christianity. May the Jews be expelled from Hungary, and then the Church, too, will be able to breathe more freely*” Christians in Hungary, as in other European countries, justified their anti-Jewish hostility in terms of church sanctioned anti-Judaism. On the day of the first deportation began, Hungarian undersecretary of state, **Laszlo Endre**, in a speech declared: “*The popes, as well as our own ancient and saintly kings, legislated draconian laws and imposed severe decrees upon this parasitic race. Thus, no one can complain that we are not acting in accordance with the spirit of Christianity when we enact draconian regulations against the Jews so as to protect our nation*”

In the town of **Veszprem**, after deportations to Auschwitz had begun, an article in the “Arrow Cross” newspaper announced a thanksgiving prayer service:

*“With the help of Divine Providence our ancient city and province have been liberated from that Judaism which sullied our nation. In our thousand-year, this is not the first time we have been freed from some scourge which had befallen us. However no previous event can compare*

*in its importance to this event, for no previous foe threatening us, whether by force or by a political takeover, had ever succeeded in overcoming us to the extent that the Jews have succeeded, with the aid of their poisoned roots which penetrated our national body and took hold of it. We are following in the footsteps of our fathers in coming to express our thanks to our God who saves us whenever we are in distress. Come and gather for the thanksgiving service which will take place on June 25 at 11:30 A.M. at the **Franciscan Church.**" (Emphasis mine)*

### **Bishops**

c. When the fascist Hungarian government began promulgating anti-Jewish laws in the 1930s, **Cardinal Justinian Seredi**, the Hungarian primate, voiced no objection over deportations, his only concern was for Jewish *converts to Catholicism*. **Michael Phayer**, author of The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, characterizes the cardinal as "*callously anti-Semitic.*"

Other Hungarian bishops were likewise indifferent toward Jewish suffering. When Cardinal Seredi considered making a statement about deportations, **Archbishop Gyula Czapik** of Eger advised against making a *strong* statement. Czapik counseled his bishops to remain silent about what was happening to Jews because many of them "*sinned against Christianity while none of their community ever reprimanded them for this.*"

In Archbishop Czapik's view, Jews were receiving *appropriate punishment* for past misdeeds; and the Church should *not endanger* its good relations with the occupation government by speaking out on their behalf. A watered-down statement was produced but ended up *not* being read from pulpits.

### **"Righteous" Catholics in Hungary**

d. There were lay Catholics in Hungary like **Augusta Gervay**, who helped scores of Jews survive the Holocaust. There were members of religious orders such as **Reverend Mother Margit Slachta**, who instructed nuns of her order to shelter Jewish refugees; and **Brother Albert Pfleger**, a French-born monk of the Marist order, who opened the Champagnat monastery in Budapest to 65-70 Jewish families and, even, vacated his own room for refugees. There were priests, such as **Fr. Emilian Novak**, who helped run a workshop that turned out fake baptismal certificates. And there was even a bishop, **Baron Vilmos Apor** of Győr, who pleaded with Cardinal Seredi to try to stop deportations.

e. Hungarian bishops in a 1994 statement declared that perpetrators were not the only ones responsible for the Holocaust. Catholics who "*through fear, cowardice, or opportunism, failed to raise their voices against the mass humiliation, deportation, and murder of their Jewish neighbors must also be held responsible, and before God we now ask forgiveness for this failure.*"

## 7. Roman Catholics in Italy

### Tolerance and Assimilation

a. Italy's record on the Holocaust, though by no means unblemished, is more positive than that of most European countries. Italian Catholics, in general, did not share Nazism's *genocidal* zeal. Before 1938, Italy's fascist government had not joined Germany, its Axis ally, in persecuting Jews. Jews made up about 0.1% of the population and, as in Germany, were well assimilated into Italian society. It was not uncommon for Italian Jews to marry Catholics. Most Italians considered Jews to be friends and neighbors (*paesani*). Jews even joined the Mussolini's fascist party out of patriotism.

### Mussolini falls in line with Hitler

b. In 1938, however, the situation for Italian Jews deteriorated when Mussolini began an anti-Semitic campaign at Hitler's urging, which included *race laws* patterned after the **Nuremberg Laws**. The **Manifesto of Italian Racism**\* declared Italians to be part of the "pure race" along with Aryans. Jews were forbidden to marry Catholics (*miscegenation*); they were barred from attending or teaching in public schools; prohibited from serving in the military or holding certain jobs; and deprived of the right to own real property. Foreign Jews living as refugees in Italy were rounded up and confined in *internment* camps. These camps, however, resembled *Japanese-American* internment camps rather than Nazi concentration camps.

\*In January 1939 (two months after **Kristallnacht**), following passage of **Manifesto of Italian Racism**, "*L'Osservatore Romano*," the Vatican newspaper, published a long homily from a Catholic bishop asserting that church officials approved of the new legislation: "*The Church has always regarded living side by side with Jews, as long as they remain Jews, as dangerous to the faith and tranquility of Christian people. It is for this reason that you find an old and long tradition of ecclesiastical legislation and discipline intended to brake and limit the action and influence of the Jews in the midst of Christians, and the contact of Christians with them, isolating the Jews and not allowing them the exercise of those offices and professions in which they could dominate or influence the spirit, the education, the customs of Christians.*"

Notwithstanding "Manifesto of Italian Racism," thousands of Jews, believing they were more likely to be protected than persecuted, sought refuge in Italy and Italian-occupied territories. In general, Italians did not *obey* Mussolini's anti-Jewish policies, although Italian intellectuals and church leaders, for the most part, did not protest against them.

In 1939, **Roberto Farinacci**, a member of Mussolini's Fascist Grand Council, while speaking on "The Church and the Jews" said: "*We fascist Catholics consider the Jewish problem from a strictly political point of view...But it comforts our souls to know*"

*that if, as Catholics, we became anti-Semites, we owe it to the teachings that the Church has promulgated over the past twenty centuries.”*

### **Nazi Germany intervenes**

c. The situation for Italian Jews took a dramatic turn for the worse in 1943 when Mussolini was overthrown and imprisoned. **Gen. Pietro Badoglio** assumed the Prime Minister's post and immediately began negotiating a ceasefire with the Allies. Enraged, Hitler used force in an attempt to bring Italy back into the Axis fold. Despite the increasingly desperate situation on the Eastern Front, Hitler dispatched troops to northern and central Italy, an unfortunate occurrence, since most Italian Jews lived in the northern regions. **SS** troops, along with the most zealous of Mussolini's *fascisti*, began rounding up Jews in Rome, see *supra*, **Milan, Genoa, Florence, Trieste**, and other northern cities. Two internment camps were built from which the Nazis transferred Jews to **Auschwitz**.

In total about 8,000 Jews were deported to Nazi death camps during the Nazi occupation. About 95% of them perished there. The remaining 40,000 Jews in Italy survived because ordinary Italians, including lower-level government officials, military, clergy and religious *passively resisted* Nazi orders. In many instances, Italians assisted Jews by obstructing deportation efforts, helping them escape to unoccupied southern Italy. 80% of Italian Jews *survived* the Holocaust.

### **Vatican Controversy**

d. The Vatican, as previously noted, has a controversial history regarding the Holocaust. Whether Pius XII, the world's most *influential* religious leader at the time did enough in response to the Holocaust is still open for debate -- over seventy years later. Pius wrote in his first encyclical, ***Summi Pontificatus***, at the beginning of WWII (October 20, 1939); "*We feel We owe no greater debt to Our office and to Our time than to testify to the truth with Apostolic Firmness: to give testimony to the truth. ...In the fulfillment of this, Our duty, we shall not let Ourselves be influenced by earthly considerations...*" The jury is still out on whether he successfully "testified to the truth" and resisted being "influenced by *earthly* considerations."

Prior to the war the Vatican appeared to respond more or less appropriately to the Nazi threat. In 1938, for example, **Pius XI** spoke out against Hitler's racial policies and against Mussolini's willingness to follow in Hitler's footsteps. Pius XI publicly asserted that a person could not be both Catholic and fascist. Greeting a group of Belgian pilgrims in Rome, he tearfully exclaimed: "*Anti-Semitism is inadmissible. We are all spiritually Semites.*" But **David Kertzer**, author of *The Popes against the Jews*, points out a number of instances where Pius XI, symptomatic of the Church's long anti-Judaic tradition, treated Jews unkindly. Pius XI died in 1939, six months before the beginning of WWII. Eugenio Pacelli, his secretary of state, as noted previously, succeeded him as Pius XII.

Critics contrast Pius XII's "inaction" regarding *Nazism* with his forthright condemnation of *communism*, including his **excommunication** in 1949, "at a stroke," of

Communist Party members *everywhere* in the world. Critics, moreover, point out that Pius failed to excommunicate Hitler, any Nazi or any collaborator outside Germany.

This is not to say, however, that Pius XII did nothing to help Jewish victims of the Holocaust. His defenders,\* among them, **David G. Dalin**, **Pierre Blet S.J., Sr.**, **Margherita Marchione**, **Ralph McInerny**, **Pinchas Lapide**, **Ronald J. Rychlak** and **Jose Sanchez** vigorously support him, maintaining that Pius did his best under extremely difficult circumstances and worked “*quietly behind the scenes*” to save Jews, fearing that public opposition to the Nazis would only make things worse. His defenders also give him credit for both general resistance of Italians to Nazi persecution of Jews, as well as *heroic* actions of church officials who engaged in rescue and resistance. It is true that the Vatican sheltered about 470 Jews behind its walls following German occupation, while another 4200 were protected in Roman monasteries and convents. And that, after the war, Rome’s **Chief Rabbi** as well as various members of Italy’s Jewish communities praised Pius XII for support during the Holocaust.

\*Some of his defenders, however, tend to question the *motives* of Pius’ critics, attacking them personally, rather than addressing their arguments. **Eugene Fisher**, associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, in a May 2001 *New York Times* article asserted that those who use the phrase “*silence of the Pope*” engage in “*bigotry*” and are motivated by “*anti-Catholicism.*”

One of Pius’ defenders, Rabbi **David G. Dalin** suggests that Yad Vashem should honor Pope Pius XII as a “Righteous Gentile,” asserting that Pius was praised by leading Jews of his day for his role in saving “more Jews than Oskar Schindler.” Pius’s admirers, Dalin contends, included Chief Rabbi **Yitzhak Halevy Herzog** of the Palestinian Mandate and Israel, Israeli Prime Ministers **Golda Meir** and **Moshe Sharett**, and Israel’s first president **Chaim Weizmann**.

Dalin writes: “*anti-papal polemics of ex-seminarians like Garry Willis and John Cornwell, of ex-priests like James Carroll, and of 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.*”

Another of his defenders, **Sr. Margherita Marchione** has written several books on Pope Pius XII during WW II, defending his sanctity, advocating his canonization and likewise urging that he be declared a “Righteous Gentile.”

Sr. Margherita writes: “*Pius XII strongly condemned the anti-Semitic persecutions, the oppression of invaded lands and the inhuman conduct of the Nazis. He urged the Christian restoration of family life and education, the reconstruction of society, the equality of nations, the suppression of hate propaganda and the formation of an international organization for disarmament and maintenance of peace. 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. Pope John Paul II consistently praised Pius XII. This generation should be talking about the debt of gratitude it owes the saintly Pope Pius XII, not maligning him! I challenge you to help me spread the truth and obtain justice."*

**Fr. Pierre Blet**, a Catholic scholar who spent 15 years examining Vatican archival documents relating to the period, maintains that "(Pius') *public silence was the cover for a secret activity through Vatican embassies and bishoprics to try to stop the deportations.*" Blet admits Pius "liked Germans" but objects to the suggestion he was a Nazi sympathizer.

Pius' defenders, in short, contend his policy of *realpolitik* was a strategy aimed at keeping the Church's hands free to help Jews and other victims of the Nazis. His detractors, on the other hand, claim that his "silence" and maneuvering behind the scenes amounted to *impotence* in the face of egregious injustice.

#### **IV. Rescue and Resistance**

*"In remembering the Holocaust we must not be numbed by the magnitude of its horrors. We must allow ourselves to be moved by the humanity the victims succeeded in preserving at all times. And we must humbly and gratefully look at these few individuals who, out of their religious beliefs or their humanistic education, with a simple gesture, often acting on impulse, became our protectors – better yet: our allies and friends. Each and every one of them is a reminder of what so many others could have done, of what so many others did not do."*

**Elie Wiesel**

*"You are my witnesses."* **Isaiah 43:10**

**Scope:** Despite the *indifference* of most Christians and the collaboration of others, individuals in every European country and from all religious backgrounds risked their lives to rescue Jews. People willing to help Jews faced severe consequences if caught and formidable logistical problems in feeding and housing refugees. The Allies' prioritization of "winning the war" over rescue attempts and the lack of access to those needing help hampered major rescue operations. Operations were geographically diverse, and the degree of difficulty involved varied from country to country. Rescuers' activities were influenced not only by the extent of Nazi control of a particular area, but by the hostile or sympathetic attitudes of native populations. Not all rescuers acted from moral conviction, however, as some offered aid only in exchange for compensation.

Rescue operations in Occupied Western Europe, particularly in Denmark, Belgium, France, and Italy succeeded in saving substantial segments of native Jewish population. Danish citizens organized fishing-boat flotillas that helped almost all that country's Jews escape to neutral Sweden. In France, a variety of groups and individuals, including church leaders and laity, rescued some 7000 children. The underground French organization *Circuit Garel* rescued many children from Nazi transit camps and hid them in foster homes. The villagers of **Chambon-sur-Lignon** in Vichy France

provided safe haven for thousands of Jews until members of the Resistance could guide them into Switzerland. The most notable example of an Italian cleric who rescued Jews (more than 300) was **Fr. Ruffino Niccacci** of the Monastery of St. Damiano in **Assisi**. Blended into the local community, some dressed as priest and nuns, not a single refugee was captured while staying in Assisi.

In Eastern Europe, more direct German control coupled with deep seated anti-Semitic attitudes among native populations created even greater obstacles to rescue efforts. Little organized relief aid was extended in Poland, although thousands of individual Poles helped Jews, particularly in Warsaw. Polish nuns concealed Jewish children in their convents and schools. In Lvov, **Leopold Socha** hid 212 Jews in the city's sewer system. **Irena Sendlar**, see *supra*, rescued over 2000 children from the Warsaw ghetto.

Many people – ranging from farmers and laborers to teachers and factory workers -- saved Jewish lives. Whether they saved a thousand lives or a single life, rescuers demonstrated the capacity of individuals to make appropriate *ethical* choices even in extreme circumstances. These caring people are shining examples of Christians who lived their faith, despite, oftentimes, lack of *moral leadership* from religious leaders. Unfortunately, acts of *conscience* and *courage* saved only a relative few.

## 1. Denmark, “A Special Case” of Rescue and Resistance

a. **Denmark**, with a predominately Protestant religious affiliation, was the *only* occupied country that actively resisted the Nazi regime's attempts to deport its Jewish citizens. On September 28, 1943, Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, a German diplomat, secretly informed the Danish resistance of Nazi plans to deport Danish Jews. The Danes responded quickly, organizing a *nationwide* effort to smuggle 8000 Danish Jews by sea to neutral Sweden.

b. Warned of what was to come, Jews began to leave Copenhagen and other cities by train, car, and on foot. With the help of the Danish people, Jews found hiding places in homes, hospitals, and churches. Within a two-week period fishermen helped ferry 7,220 Danish Jews and 680 non-Jewish family members to safety across the narrow body of water separating Denmark from Sweden

The Danish rescue effort was unique because it was nationwide. It was not completely successful, however, as approximately 500 Danish Jews were deported to the **Theresienstadt** (Terezin) in Czechoslovakia. Yet, even of these deported Jews, all but 51 survived, largely because Danish officials pressured Germans with their concerns for deportee well-being. The Danes, contrary to what defenders of Pius XII contend, proved that resistance to Nazi race policies could be effective without adverse results.

## 2. Rescue and Resistance Elsewhere in Europe

a. In German-occupied **Poland**, some Poles did, indeed, assist Jews. For instance, in September 1942, **Zegota**, a Polish underground organization which engaged in rescue and resistance began operations. Moreover, soldiers of nationalist Polish Home Army, the communist Polish People's Army and members of Zegota assisted Jewish fighters in April 1943 by attacking German positions during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. From the beginning of deportations in late July 1942 until German occupiers leveled Warsaw in the autumn of 1944, as many as 20,000 Jews lived in hiding among

Polish civilians. Polish nuns routinely protected Jewish children in their convents and schools.

b. Throughout Occupied Europe, rescuers came from every religious background. Certain churches, orphanages, and families provided safe haven for Jewish refugees, the most famous refugee family was that of **Anne Frank** in the **Netherlands**. Protestants of the small French village of **Le Chambon-sur-Lignon** sheltered between 3,000 and 5,000 refugees, most of them Jews. In **France** and **Italy**, underground networks run by Catholic clergy and laity saved thousands. Such networks were especially active in southern France, where Jews were hidden and smuggled to safety to Switzerland and Spain, and in northern Italy, where many went into hiding after Germany occupied Italy in September 1943.

c. In the summer of 1942 in **Belgium**, when Nazis began rounding up Jewish families, parents searched desperately for safe haven for their children. As author **Suzanne Vromen** reveals in **Hidden Children of the Holocaust**, many of these children found sanctuary with Belgian families and in Roman Catholic convents and orphanages.

d. In **Budapest**, Swedish diplomat **Raoul Wallenberg**, see *infra*, Swiss diplomat **Carl Lutz**, and Italian citizen **Giorgio Perlasca** provided tens of thousands of Jews in 1944 with certification that they were under the “protection” of neutral powers. These certifications exempted bearers from most anti-Jewish measures of Hungary’s fascist government, including deportation. German industrialist **Oskar Schindler**, see *infra*, immortalized in Stephen Spielberg’s Oscar winning film “Schindler’s List,” rescued over a thousand Jewish workers employed in his enamelware factory located outside the Krakow ghetto in German-occupied Poland.

e. Deportation by local military and police authorities of more than 11,000 Jews from Bulgarian-occupied **Thrace**, Macedonia, and **Pirot** in March 1943 shamed key Bulgarian political, intellectual, and religious figures into action. Their public protests induced Bulgaria’s **King Boris III** to reverse his government’s decision to comply with Nazi requests to deport Jews from Bulgaria and *no* Jews were deported from Belgium.

f. **Jan Karski**, a courier for the Polish government-in-exile, based in London, to non-communist underground movements, sought to expose Nazi extermination policy. Karski met with Jewish leaders in the Warsaw ghetto in late summer of 1942, transmitting their reports of mass killings in **Belzec** to Allied leaders, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

g. Some U.S. based groups engaged in rescue efforts. The **Quakers' American Friends Service Committee**, the **Unitarian** Church, and other groups coordinated relief activities for Jewish refugees in France, Portugal, and Spain throughout the war. A variety of U.S. based organizations (both religious and secular, Jewish and non-Jewish) cooperated in securing entry visas into the United States, arranging placement and, in some cases, eventual repatriation for approximately 1,000 unaccompanied Jewish refugee children.

### 3. “Righteous among the Nations”

**Scope:** Tens of thousands of people from all walks of life protected Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Some, who risked their lives, have been officially recognized for heroism by the State of Israel. Of 8.86 million Jews who lived in Europe from 1933 to 1945, six million perished in the Holocaust. Hundreds of thousands of others would have perished were it not for the courageous intervention of thousands of individuals. *Institutions*, for the most part, failed to respond appropriately, but there were *individuals* who did. And many of these *people of conscience* paid with their lives. Additionally, there were thousands of acts of valor and, no doubt, even more simple acts of kindness which will never be told because these good people were either executed or acted anonymously.

To date approximately 20,000 thousand heroes from countries throughout the world have been honored as “Righteous Persons” or “Righteous Gentiles.” Some of these are familiar like **Oskar Schindler** and **Raoul Wallenberg**. Others are less well known like **Chiue Sugihara** of Japan and **Feng-Shan Ho** of China. These courageous men and women saved thousands or perhaps sheltered only one, but all acted at great personal risk to themselves and their families. Each has been awarded a medal inscribed with the Talmudic phrase "*Whoever saves a single soul, it is as if he had saved the entire world.*"

Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor, **Ellie Wiesel**, has written; “*Let us not forget that there is a moment when the moral choice is made. Often because of one story or one book or one person, we are able to make a different choice, a choice for humanity, for life. And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them.*”

#### Examples of “Righteous Gentiles”

a. **Raoul Wallenberg** —a Swedish diplomat who made it his personal mission to help save the Jews of Hungary. More than 30,000 Jews received Swedish passports from him. He set up "*safe houses*," distributed food and medical supplies, and virtually single-handedly set up a bureaucracy in Budapest dedicated to protecting Jews. More than 90,000 Budapest Jews were deported to the death camps, but because of Wallenberg's efforts the total number of those murdered was reduced by half. As a diplomat, he successfully defied the Nazis at great risk to his own safety. Following the "liberation" of Budapest by the Soviets, he was arrested (by the Soviets), sent to prison, and never heard from again.

b. **Oskar Schindler** -- a German businessman who proved how much one person with imagination and courage could accomplish when motivated by love of neighbor.

c. **Dr. Jan Karshi** — the contact between the Polish resistance and the Polish government in exile. He was smuggled into the Warsaw ghetto to observe conditions. Asked to describe what he witnessed there, he reported to world leaders, including President Roosevelt.

d. **Cardinal Archbishop Andreas Szeptycki of Lvov**-- Primate of the Polish Roman Catholic Church, *ordered* clergy of his archdiocese to protect Jews.

f. **Wladyslaw Bartoszewski** —a founder of the Polish resistance movement, **Zegota**, comprised mostly of Catholics. He worked to provide false documents to Jews living outside the Warsaw ghetto. In the fall of 1942, he helped found an organization (Council for Aid to Jews) which successfully saved many Jews from the gas chambers.

g. **Pastor Andre Trocme and Daniel Trocme** — Pastor Trocme was the religious leader of the Huguenot village of **Le Chambon-sur-Lignon**, France, which hid and saved 5,000 Jews. Teacher Daniel Trocme was deported with his students in the only successful Gestapo raid and died in Maidanek.

h. **Irena Sendlar**, *see supra*.

i. **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg**, *see supra*.

### **Yad Vashem**

a. **Yad Vashem** is a museum and memorial in Jerusalem devoted to the history of the Holocaust. The walkway to the entrance is lined with carob trees, each dedicated to the memory of a “Righteous Person.” Now, because of lack of space, Righteous Persons have their names inscribed on a Wall of Honor in the “Garden of the Righteous.” A special committee considers proposals for additions to the commemoration list, currently at 20,000. More than 2,000 proposals are pending.

## **V. Concluding Thoughts**

*“Those comparatively few Christians who maintained their integrity during the Holocaust did in fact challenge the dominant culture, some perished. A good many more suffered persecution as a counterculture to totalitarian creeds and systems. But that does not excuse the rest of us, who wittingly or unwittingly **accommodated**; certainly it does not cover the **apostasy** of the millions who collaborated. The majority of those who suffered martyrdom as witnesses to the truth of God in the twentieth century were Jews.”* (Emphasis mine)

Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews*.

*“...the Church can only approach the Shoah in such a place and on such an occasion in a spirit of repentance (teshuva) for the evil that so many of its baptized members perpetrated and so many others failed to stop...The saving deeds and lives of Catholics that we remember here today represent crucially important moral lights in a period of darkness. Our celebration of the brightness of that light and the preciousness of that witness is at once intensified and muted by the poignant awareness that they were, when all is said and done, relatively few among us, and no one*

*can say how many, because some surely perished with those they tried to save.*” **Cardinal William Keeler** of Baltimore, U.S., Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, 1997.

Hitler’s rise to dictatorial power from total obscurity (within a republic) was by no means a foregone conclusion. There were plenty of opportunities along the way to stop him, *if* more people of conscience had been willing to do so. In his autobiography, Mein Kampf, (“*My Struggle*”) published in 1925, *eight* years before becoming German chancellor in 1933 and *seventeen* years before his death camps were at full killing capacity in 1942, Hitler clearly set forth his vision for the Greater Third Reich, including his plan for territorial expansion into Western and Eastern Europe and the creation of a “racially pure” society, dominated by *die Herrenrasse*, a Teutonic “master race.” In Mein Kampf, he minces no words in calling for the elimination of Jews from Germany and all of Europe, referring to them as *vermin, parasites, maggots, polluters* and *destroyers of Aryan humanity, corrupters of society*. His *virulent* anti-Semitism was readily apparent for all to see.

Time and time again in Scripture, Jesus, who was born, lived and died a Jew, made it crystal clear that to be his disciple required more than lip service. It required action -- moral and ethical behavior grounded in love of God and love of neighbor. He said: “Love one another *as* I have loved you (**John** 15:12). Christians too are required to obey God’s command recorded in the Hebrew bible: “*Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof*”...”Justice, justice, you shall pursue” (**Deut.** 16:20), most particularly justice for innocent victims of the worst forms of *injustice*... like genocide. When secular law is intrinsically evil like the Nuremburg Laws of 1935, which stripped Jews of human dignity and their civil rights, a Christian’s duty is clearly and always to obey God’s law.

Something then went terribly wrong for Christianity during the Holocaust. And what resulted from the obvious *disconnect* between Christian belief and Christian behavior was, arguably, the worst catastrophe in human history. Jews ponder the Holocaust and rightly ask: Where was God? Christians must to do the same and ask: Where was Church? Church as *institution* and Church as *people of God*? The sad truth about the Holocaust is that it would never have happened if more Christians at the time and for centuries before had genuinely *practiced* their faith.

Religion is as religion *does*, all the rest is talk. That explains Ellie Wiesel’s provocative declaration: “*Christianity died at Auschwitz.*” The challenge for *post-Auschwitz* Christians throughout the world is to prove that indictment wrong.

One reason it so important to teach children and adults about the Holocaust is embodied in historian **George Santayana**’s prophetic warning: “*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.*” There are those living today, after all, including Iran’s President, **Mahoud Ahmadinejad**, who deny the Holocaust happened. Only a few years ago, of course, it happened in **Bosnia** and in **Rwanda**. Moreover, genocide, now euphemistically termed “*ethnic cleansing*,” is happening today... in the Darfur region of **Sudan**. And human nature being what it is, it’s likely to happen again.

Moreover, today, more than 60 years after the Holocaust ended, anti-Semitism is not just a fact of history, it is a current event. U.S. embassies worldwide report an increase in anti-Semitic incidents -- attacks on Jewish people, property, cemeteries, community institutions, and synagogues. Discredited myths about Jews, like their need for the blood of Christian children in religious rituals or the existence of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, stubbornly persist, particularly in Middle Eastern countries. And neo-Nazi groups continue to spring up throughout the world.

**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**, Russian novelist and Nobel laureate wrote: *“The line separating good and evil passes through every human heart...and even in the best hearts there remains an unuprooted small corner of evil.”* That’s why Jesus cautions his followers to be vigilant about their behavior, so as not to fall into the trap of *self-deception*.\* Obviously, the consequences can be lethal.

\* *“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”* (Mt. 7:21)

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