

The Two-Thousand-Year Road to the Holocaust

Session Eleven

Roman Catholics and the Holocaust (1938-1945)

By Anthony J. Sciolino

*“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 **conscienc**es, 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

*“...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 ... 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**

“...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.” **Fr. Michael McGarry**

Scope: Nazism in Germany arose phoenix-like from the ashes of World War I, the so-call “war to end all wars,” and led to the cataclysm of World War II. Its *Fifty-five* million victims included combatants and non-combatants 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 endured the privations of post-war recovery and dislocation.

The Holocaust* was the systematic, state-organized persecution and murder of at least six million Jews, including 1.5 million children, by Nazi Germany *and* its “puppet” or partner regimes in Europe. Not only were two-thirds of European Jewry and one third of world Jewry annihilated, but so too were at least 5 million *non-Jews*, including Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), Poles and other Slavic people, Soviet POWs, homosexuals, the mentally and physically disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and political dissidents. In short, anyone deemed unfit to live among the Aryan “master race” in the Greater Third Reich or anyone opposed to the Nazi regime was targeted for *elimination*.

*The term “Holocaust,” originally from the Greek word “*holokauston*” means “sacrifice by fire.”

The uniqueness of the Holocaust is rooted in the form, function and determination of the racist ideology that brought it about. Adopting an extreme version of anti-Semitism based on late 19th and early 20th century racial theory, Nazi ideology depicted Jews as a “genetically” inferior race,* which threatened to “pollute” the purity of the racially superior Germanic people. Jews were not the only threat to racial purity, however, so too were “defective” and “asocial” people like the mentally and physically disabled, homosexuals and habitual criminals. And when German hegemony began to spread throughout Europe with the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Russians and other Slavic peoples, as members of another inferior race, were also targeted. “Inferior” races, apart from the Jews, existed *only* to serve the “master” race. But, as carriers of absolute *evil* in their genes and “blood” who were beyond redemption, Jews headed the target list.

In 1923, early in his political career, Adolph Hitler proclaimed: “The Jew is a race, but not human.” According to his worldview (“*weltanschauung*”), it was Germany’s destiny to eradicate the Jewish menace from the face of the earth. Admittedly, Nazi racist ideology regarding Jews differed from previously encountered anti-Semitic tradition, but it needed to build on existing *Judeophobia*, termed the “world’s oldest hatred,” for its particularly virulent brand of anti-Semitism to gain popular acceptance.

* In point of fact, Jews, do not comprise a “race.” Rather, they are united by faith, history, tradition and other cultural qualities. Converts, for example, are accepted into Judaism. Jews share no distinguishing genetic feature, no biological marker that identifies them as Jewish.

Benefiting from Hitler’s skills as a charismatic leader and spellbinding orator, coupled with the masterful use of propaganda by **Joseph Goebbels**,* the Nazis achieved increasing popularity during the late 1920’s and early ‘30’s, promising a “better way of life” for Germans suffering from severe post WWI hardship. Their vision of “a better way of life” was grounded in nationalism/patriotism, racial “purity,” anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism, a single-party fascist dictatorship, state sponsored terror, a state-controlled economy and territorial expansionism throughout Europe. The party’s platform promised renewed glory for Germany on the worldwide stage. Although a minority political party

in 1932, the National Socialist Workers' Party, aka the Nazi Party, was the largest in the **Weimar Republic**, the post-war democratic government imposed on Germany by the victorious allies under terms of the **Versailles Treaty** of 1919. On January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by President **Paul von Hindenburg** and the Nazis began their rapid ascent to totalitarian control. What resulted during the ensuing twelve years of Nazi rule, intended to last a thousand years, was, arguably, the worst catastrophe** in human history.

*Nazi propaganda relentlessly depicted Jews as international *communist* conspirators; as dangerous criminals (child predators in particular) and as a life-threatening *pestilence*. Even children were exposed to it as this verse from a 1936 German children's book illustrates:

“The Devil is the father of the Jew.
When God created the world,
He invented the races:
The Indians, the Negroes, and the Chinese,
And also the wicked creature called the Jew.”

**the Hebrew word “Shoah” means “catastrophe”

The horrific actions of the Nazis and their European collaborators violated every known moral precept. How could the Holocaust have started in 20th century Germany, a highly educated, industrially developed country at the heart of Western culture and civilization, birthplace of Beethoven, Goethe, Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation? How could it have spread so quickly throughout *Christian* Europe? How could “ordinary” people, the vast majority of whom were Christian, have been involved as perpetrators, sympathizers and bystanders? The answers to these and other perplexing questions can be found among these causes of the Holocaust:

- An evil and charismatic leader
- Chaotic post-WWI conditions
- Popular discontent
- Masterful use of propaganda
- A brutal totalitarian regime
- State sponsored terrorism
- Territorial expansionism
- The “fog of war”
- *Anti-Judaism*/anti-Semitism
- Fear of “Judeo-Bolshevism”
- Extreme nationalism/patriotism
- Blind obedience to state authority
- A paralysis of will
- Lack of moral guidance
- Widespread failure of *conscience*

- Collaboration, complicity and *indifference*

It is noteworthy that Hitler became Chancellor of Germany -- under process of law, winning 37% of the popular vote in 1932, within a parliamentary democracy-- *not* in a coup d'état. During the first year and a half of National Socialism, his primary focus was establishing and consolidating his control over German society. Almost immediately, within the first three months of assuming power, his racist policy toward Jews began to unfold. On April 1, 1933, for example, there was countrywide boycott of Jewish businesses. Also in April, all "non-Aryan" medical doctors, pharmacists, dentists and dental technicians were forbidden by law to serve in German hospitals, clinics and public health centers. Passage of the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935 stripped Jews of their citizenship rights and revealed the racist core of Nazi ideology. Subsequent legislation, inter alia, excluded Jews from public schools, universities, the judiciary, civil service positions, even from public parks and public transportation; forced them to register their property; confiscated items like radios and bicycles; forbid Jewish doctors to treat non-Jewish patients -- all intended to *marginalize* them within German society. The prime target of Nazi fanaticism was, at first, the relatively small Jewish population of Germany, approximately 525,000 (less than one percent of the population). The Holocaust began on November 9 and 10, 1938, during *Kristallnacht*,* but quickly spread to all of Europe. Contrary to what some revisionist historians contend, the Holocaust was neither uniquely German nor exclusively neo-pagan.

* *Kristallnacht* ("The Night of Broken Glass"), was a state sponsored *pogrom*, that took place throughout Germany and Occupied Austria. It included physical attacks on Jews, breaking windows, looting, and the destruction of 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses. Ninety-one Jews were killed and 30,000 Jewish men—a quarter of the Jewish males in Germany—were taken to concentration camps where more than 1,000 of them died. Approximately 1,670 synagogues were ransacked, and 267 set on fire. In Vienna alone 95 synagogues or houses of prayer were destroyed.

From 1933 to 1938, the regime pressured Jews to emigrate out of Germany (leaving the bulk of their property behind), but few countries, including Great Britain, Canada and the United States,* would accept them as political refugees. In July 1938, at the invitation of President **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, delegates of 32 nations convened at a seaside French resort in Evian-les-Bains to discuss the international refugee problem. Although delegates at the **Evian Conference** expressed sympathy for Jewish refugees, except for the Dominican Republic, the borders of their countries, outside existing quotas, remained closed. The ineffectual results of Evian Conference clearly demonstrated to the Nazis that forced emigration would not solve the "Jewish problem."

* In 1938, four U.S. public opinion polls showed that up to 85% of the American public, still in the throes of the Great Depression, opposed raising immigration quotas to allow entry of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. On May 13, 1939, a refugee ship, the "**Saint Louis**," sailed from Europe to Cuba with 937 Jews on board. The ship arrived in Cuba, but was refused entry into port; only

29 passengers were allowed to disembark, a few committed suicide. For thirty six days, the *Saint Louis* sailed from port to port including to the United States, Mexico, and Jamaica, but the ship, in each instance, was ordered back to Europe. The governments of Great Britain, France, Holland and Belgium finally agreed to divide some of the passengers among them. Of the 908 passengers who returned to Europe, 254 (nearly 28 percent) are known to have died in the Holocaust. 288 found refuge in Britain. Of the 620 who returned to the continent, 366 (just over 59 percent) are known to have survived the war.

Anti-Semitism was pervasive outside Europe, as well. Although aware of Nazi racial policy, the governments of Great Britain, Canada and the United States, for example, made few attempts to mitigate the worsening situation for Jews in Europe. Hitler and Goebbels interpreted the reluctance of these countries to offer refuge to Jews as license to *radicalize* Nazi racist policy. They eventually concluded that widespread public *indifference* to the plight of Jews and the “the fog of war”* would provide them with “cover” for the Final Solution. Hitler, no doubt, was also emboldened by the lack of public outrage over of the Armenian “genocide” perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks during WWI, in which up to 1.5 million lost their lives.

*The “fog of war” is a term used to describe the level of ambiguity in situational awareness experienced by participants in military operations, which, among other things, diminishes cultural taboos.

After the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, as military conquest brought new territory and *millions* more Jews under Nazi domination, it became apparent that solving the “Jewish problem” would require a more “robust” plan. Poland’s population alone included 3.3 million Jews, 10% of its total -- largest concentration in Europe. At first the plan called for forcibly “deporting” Jews to Madagascar, an island off the coast of central Africa and, when that proved unfeasible, to restricted areas in the East like Lublin, Poland. With the invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941 (“**Operation Barbarossa**”), however, as even more Jews came under Nazi control, “deportation” assumed a “diabolical” connotation.

In a villa on Lake Wannsee outside Berlin on January 20, 1942, fifteen high ranking Nazi party and German government officials gathered for a conference chaired by **Reinhard Heydrich**, nicknamed the “the hangman.” At the Wannsee Conference during a 90 minute working lunch, the regime revised its plan for resolving the “Jewish problem.” Entitled the “Final Solution,” the plan called for “deporting” European Jews to six industrialized *killing centers*, to be located in Poland -- Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, and the largest, Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they would exterminated. The goal became the complete *annihilation* of European Jewry (8.86 million people, including Jews in Soviet Union and Great Britain). Sadly, the world’s response to the worsening situation for European Jewry was disappointingly muted... including the response of the Roman Catholic Church, hereinafter, the “Church.”

* Before the death camps were constructed – where the bulk of the mass killing took place -- over 1.5 million Jews were executed, one bullet at a time, in what has been termed -- “Holocaust by bullets.” To date, the work of **Fr. Patrick Desbois** and his team of the Yahad-In Unum Association has identified over 800 mass gravesites and other execution sites located in the Ukraine.

In the 1930’s, religious affiliation in Germany was 94% Christian – 40% Roman Catholic, 54% Protestant. Jews, as noted *supra*, comprised less than 1 % of the population, approximately 525,000. Organized into twenty-five dioceses headed by a Vatican appointed bishop, the Church in 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 Nazi Germany; the state collected a tax earmarked for church expenses and subsidized church schools. Religious instruction was included in the public school curriculum; chaplains provided spiritual guidance to military personnel; theology was taught in state universities. Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program professed “*positive Christianity*” as the foundation of the German state.

In a speech to the Reichstag (the German parliament) in February 1933, Hitler declared:

“The churches will be an integral part of German national life...The National Government will preserve and defend those basic principles on which our nation has been built up. It regards Christianity as the foundation of our national morality and the family as the basis of national life”

In 1934, “Twenty-Five Points of the German Religion” written by **Ernst Bergmann** was published in Germany. It asserted, among other things, that Christ was not a Jew but a Nordic warrior put to death by Jews whose death spared the world from Jewish domination and that Adolf Hitler was the new “messiah” sent to earth to save the world from Jews. On May 1, 1934, the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*, published by **Julius Streicher** – one of Germany’s most popular periodicals and Hitler’s favorite–reminded readers that throughout history the Jews had been guilty of committing ritual murder of Christian children and using their blood for religious rituals (blood libel).

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-Birkenau), were baptized Catholics. Catholics comprised 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.

Hitler's toxic brand of anti-Semitism, shamelessly cloaked in *religiosity*, revealed itself early on. In Mein Kampf ("My Struggle"), his autobiography, first published in 1925, he declared that the *elimination* of Jews from Europe was his "sacred" mission. 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." In 1938, Hitler told his Minister of Justice, **Hans Frank**, that it was his (Hitler's) destiny to fulfill the curse imposed by Jews on themselves in the New Testament: "His (Jesus') blood be upon us and upon our children." (Mt. 27:25) These are just two examples of how Hitler's insidiously effective propaganda machine was able to effortlessly tap into the "poisonous groundwater" of Christian anti-Judaism (based on religion)* and easily blend into Nazi anti-Semitism (based on race). Regrettably, when Nazi racist ideology defined the Jew as a demonic "other," it was building on an aspect of the European psyche firmly in place for centuries before Hitler was born, established and encouraged by the Church itself.

*Most Catholics are aware of the many saints, popes, religious leaders and legions of ordinary believers who down through the ages have genuinely lived according to the words and example of Jesus himself. But what most Catholics are not aware of is how, for 1900 plus years, church history harbored a powerful anti-Jewish bias -- imbedded in its core doctrine and practice, which, according to what social scientists term the "*law of unintended consequences*,"** became, albeit, inadvertently a source of evil. See Syllabus for "Anti-Judaism Spawns Anti-Semitism." Holocaust Road, Session Three.

*"unintended consequences" (sometimes unanticipated consequences or unforeseen consequences) are outcomes that are not the outcomes intended by purposeful action.

In April 1933, Hitler met with two German Catholic prelates, **Bishop Wilhelm Berning** and **Monsignor Steinman**, advising them that his policy toward Jews would mirror the Church's treatment of Jews for centuries. To illustrate, he reminded them that the Church regarded Jews as dangerous and had confined them in ghettos. He then boasted that his Jewish *measures* would do "Christianity a great service." Bishop Berning and Monsignor Steinmann later described their discussion with the *fuehrer* as "cordial and to the point." Hitler exploited not only Roman Catholicism, but Protestantism as well. For example, he took great satisfaction in quoting from **Martin Luther's** brutally anti-Semitic treatise "*On the Jews and Their Lies*."

In pursuit of a racially pure society, the Nazis abandoned the fundamental commandment of traditional morality, "*Thou shall not kill*." Hitler stressed this point when he proclaimed:

*"The Ten Commandments have lost their validity...Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing man from the restraint of any intelligence that has taken charge; from the dirty and degrading self-mortification of a chimera called **conscience** and **morality**, and*

from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a few can bear...” (Emphasis mine)

Tragically, a significant number of European Christians bought into Nazi anti-Semitism, as evidenced, for example, by the words of **Roberto Farinacci**, a member of Mussolini's Fascist Grand Council, who, 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.*”

It is a stark historical truth that longstanding and widely held church sanctioned hostility toward Jews helps explain the complicity and *indifference** displayed by so many Europeans in what happened to Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. It also helps explain why so many failed to do as Jesus commanded in his “gospel of love,” i.e. “... *love one another as I have loved you.*” (Jn. 13:34) Although Nazism was based on a racist ideology that was explicitly *anti-Christian*, it could not have caused evil on such a massive scale without Christian culpability.

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

Beginning in the 1st century, Christians had been conditioned to view Jews with suspicion and hatred. This, over time, *numbed* Christian consciences* to injustices directed against Jews. Thus ethically *desensitized*, many Christians in 20th century Europe, *including* church leaders, were drawn to Nazi anti-Semitism, at least in its early “milder” form, with some even willing to become perpetrators, in its final most virulent form. Most Holocaust victims lived in countries with large Roman Catholic populations and/or heads of state, e.g. Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, Spain, Lithuania, France, Hungary, Slovakia and Croatia. And it should be noted that in Poland, not only were 90% of Polish Jews murdered, but also *three million* Polish Roman Catholics as well; and in the former Yugoslavia (Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia), not only were 80% of Yugoslav Jews murdered, but also *three quarters of one million* Orthodox Catholic Serbs.

*See Pope John Paul II quote *supra*.

In its campaign to *eliminate* European Jewry, as its sphere of influence spread through territorial expansion, Nazi Germany found tens of thousands of willing *accomplices* among the populations of Western and Eastern Europe. Following the invasion and occupation of France in May 1940, for example, German officers expressed surprise at the eagerness of some French nationals to please their occupiers. It was local police, the *gendarmarie*, who did the roundup of French Jews, most of whom went along willingly, trusting that their fellow countrymen would do them no harm.* With the invasion of the Soviet Union in May 1941 (**Operation Barbarossa**), this pattern of local complicity surfaced to an even greater degree, as local and national police organizations, militias, security forces, auxiliaries, and “ordinary” citizens participated in roundups and executions. In Romania, to cite another example, the “enthusiasm” of volunteer ethnic

German and Romanian army units taking part in mass shootings surprised even the coldhearted SS. Hitler's directive regarding Operation Barbarossa called for waging "total war," including executing all Soviet officers and political commissars; enslaving all Soviet POWs; and executing all Jews.

*The round-up of French Jews is described in the historical novel, Sarah's Key by Tatiana De Rosnay

As the mobile killing squads of the *Einsatzgruppen* entered Eastern Europe alongside German army units in 1941, the comparatively thin ranks of the killing squads were augmented by units of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian nationalist collaborators. These squads came directly to the home communities of Jews and massacred them there. Entire Jewish populations of towns and villages were completely wiped out.* The particularly brutal *Hilfspolizei*, the Ukrainian auxiliary police, hunted down Jews escaping from ghettos and brutally murdered them.** Shamefully, it was the willing collaboration of many thousands of German and non-German Christians, including, most notoriously, **Fr. Jozef Tiso**, *priest* and fascist leader of **Slovakia**; **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic**, *priest* and death camp commandant in **Croatia**, and **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac**, Vatican appointed *prelate* of **Croatia**, all of whom were convicted of war crimes after the war (Tiso and Filipovic were *executed*), that made the Holocaust possible.

* In August 1941 at Kamenets-Podolski in the Ukraine, for example, members of the *Einsatzgruppen* and local Ukrainian nationalists murdered about 25,000 Jews at the edge of huge open pits. Victims included 5000 local Jews as well as nearly 20,000 Jews "deported" from Hungary. 1.5 million Jews were slaughtered in this manner *before* the death camps became operational. Additionally, many died while crowded into mobile "killing vans," forced to breathe deadly exhaust fumes from vehicles as they were driven through the countryside.

** During the Chimelnitski Massacres of 1648-56, Ukrainians (Cossacks) slaughtered more than 100,000 Jews in cities and towns across Poland. This 17th century massacre caused the greatest loss of Jewish lives until it was surpassed by the Holocaust in the 20th century.

Regrettably, churches, as *institutions*, by and large, offered little opposition to Nazi extremism. Most churches, with the notable exception of the **Danish Lutheran Church** and the **Jehovah Witnesses** failed to measure up to the high ethical standard demanded of Jesus in his gospel of love, in effect, buckling under pressure when the Nazis restricted church functions, closed church schools and presses, and sent the courageous few of their members who resisted to concentration camps or prison. To ensure survival, among other reasons, churches chose "accommodation" with the Nazi regime over confrontation. The Vatican, as a "sovereign" city state, for example, adhered to its official wartime policy of "neutrality" despite repeated violations of the Reich Concordat, including provisions meant to protect Jewish converts to Catholicism.

*The Reich Concordat of 1933 between the Vatican and Nazi Germany was patterned after the Lateran Treaty of 1928 between the Vatican and fascist Italy.

There are a number of other reasons, in addition to widespread anti-Semitism, that helps explain Christian complicity in the Holocaust. German Catholics, like their Protestant counterparts, for example, were motivated by **nationalism** or **patriotism** and Germany's long tradition of **respect for authority**, reinforced by church teaching.* *Extreme* nationalism/patriotism and *excessive* respect for authority, however, became excuses for *blind* obedience to state policies, including *morally* indefensible ones.** At the Nuremberg Trials (1945-46), 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 regress more than 12 centuries.*”

* When in 1938, **Cardinal Adolph Bertram** addressed the 30,000 Catholics in his diocese of Breslau (now part of Poland), he invoked Scripture on behalf of the Nazi 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 (St. Paul): ‘Let every man be subject to the powers placed over him. (Romans 13:1)’*”

Obviously, not every Christian blindly obeyed state authority. There were numerous “*people of conscience*,” like Jehovah Witness, **Mary Smigiel, a Polish secretary who refused her boss' demand for her to typewrite “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 atrocities many Christians 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.*” (Mt. 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, the so called “*shepherds of the flock*,” failed, by word and example, to provide *moral guidance* to the flock, i.e. they failed, during a time of egregious injustice, to assist the faithful in “*conscience formation.*” This is one of the themes of The Deputy, Rolf Hochhuth's controversial play about Pope **Pius XII**, which opened on Broadway in 1963. Clearly the Holocaust could not have happened without a widespread *failure* of conscience. On the issue of “conscience” Vatican Council II in 1965 decreed:

***“*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." "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," ("**Gaudium et Spes**")

"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." "Declaration on Religious Liberty," ("**Dignitatis Humanae**")

There were, of course, courageous church men and women whose actions reflected gospel values and the dictates of conscience. One example of a priest who provided moral leadership to his flock was **Fr. Max Josef Metzger** -- a WWI German army chaplain and founder of *Peace Alliance of German Catholics*. For publicly protesting against Nazi race policy, Fr. Metzger was arrested by the Gestapo, condemned for high treason and executed in April, 1944. Another was **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg** who, among other things, prayed openly for the welfare of Jews while presiding at Mass. Fr. Lichtenberg died on his way to Dachau concentration camp*. It is important to note that during the twelve years of the Third Reich, 2,600 Roman Catholic priests were confined to the "Priester-Block" (priests' barracks) at Dachau. Additionally, at least 149 priests died at Auschwitz, including **Fr. Maximilian Kolbe** who was canonized a saint in 1981; and more than 2000 Polish clergy, including five bishops, died between 1939 to 1945 at the hands of the Nazis.

* Dachau, opened in 1933, served as a prototype for other Nazi concentration camps like Buchenwald in Germany and Mauthausen in Occupied Austria. Between 1933 and 1945 more than 3.5 million Germans were confined, mostly for political reasons, in camps or prison. Just about every community in Germany had residents taken away. Newspapers continuously reported of "the removal of enemies of the Reich to concentration camps."

Despite the *passivity* of most churches and *collaboration* or *indifference* of many, many Christians, there were in Germany and in every Nazi occupied European country those who behaved *humanely* even *heroically*, who demonstrated that compassion and decency still existed in what had become "hell on earth." Undeterred by Nazi threats and hostile surroundings, these "people of conscience," among other things, took Jewish children into their homes, convents and schools; concealed and provided for entire families; established "underground" passage routes to neutral countries; provided false documents; shared their meager provisions; and refrained from denouncing their Jewish neighbors to the authorities. In the face of unimaginable horror, these good people demonstrated concern for human life and dignity, engaging in acts of kindness, large and small, to those whom Jesus termed -- the "*least*" of my brethren." (Mt.25:45). Priests, bishops, members of religious congregations and lay Catholics are among the over 20,000 people who risked their lives to rescue Jews, recognized as "**Righteous Gentiles**"

by the Israeli government at Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem. All these “exemplary” people deserve to be remembered and celebrated.

Rescue efforts ranged from the isolated actions of individuals to the cooperative action of organized networks, which resulted, for example, in the survival of approximately 100,000 “hidden children.” Prioritization by the Allies of “winning the war” before attempting rescue efforts, widespread apathy and indifference, and lack of access to victims, however, hampered major rescue operations. Courageous people willing to hide Jews faced formidable obstacles, including summary execution if discovered. Rescue activities were influenced not only by the extent of Nazi control of a geographic area, but by the level of hostility or sympathy for Jews within local populations. The degree of hostility towards Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, was a particularly daunting obstacle. Regrettably, moreover, not all rescuers acted from *moral* or humanistic conviction. Some provided aid only in exchange for compensation.

The difference in Jewish survival rates varied greatly in the 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: “*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 those who engaged in rescue and resistance. She identified three common characteristics: 1. *having a clear sense of right and wrong;* 2) *not being afraid to stand alone and;* 3) *feeling no need to follow others.*

Although tens of thousands of Christians acted humanely toward Jews during the Holocaust, even heroically, the vast majority did neither. Some were perpetrators, some collaborators and, by far, most were bystanders, people who looked the other way and pretended not to know what was going on. Church leaders, in general, were *passive*, some complicit or worse. A few church leaders even *participated* as perpetrators. Sadly, acts of courage and conscience were the exception, not the rule. All too seldom did Christians reach out with compassion to helpless victims – a clear violation of Jesus’ teaching and example. What Christians did and failed to do continues to haunt and challenge the Christian world. It is a painful truth that must be acknowledged, for as **Pope St. Gregory the Great** (590-604) said centuries ago: “*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), Vatican Secretary of State under **Pope Pius XI** and wartime pope, is the subject of ongoing controversy.* The controversy started after the war when it came to light that Vatican approved “rat lines” assisted Nazi war criminals to 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, primarily by conservatives within the Vatican curia, including Pope

Benedict XVI himself, to have Pius XII canonized a saint... despite opposition from Jewish groups and others who urge that no action be taken, at least, 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.**

Many scholars contend that Pius should have attempted to do more, at least, to minimize the carnage of the Holocaust. The Vatican and his supporters, on the other hand, counter that Pius’ policy of *realpolitik* (“practical politics”) was intended to keep the Church’s hands free to help the maximum number of victims.* His defenders maintain that the “black scandal” that began with The Deputy is both without historical basis and a “communist conspiracy” to discredit the Church. His critics claim that, as the most visible and influential religious leader in the world, as *the pre-eminent “shepherd of the flock,”* from whom “exceptional” witness was required and expected, Pius’ “silence” and “maneuvering” behind the scenes amounted to *impotence* during a moral crisis of unprecedented proportion. Some critics contend that he, in effect, played the role of a *politician* (as head of a sovereign city state) when the world needed a *prophet*.

*Pius defender, the late **Ralph McInerny**, University of Notre Dame philosopher and novelist, argued that liberal Catholic critics of Pius XII, like **James Carroll**, **John Cornwell** and **Gary Wills**, are motivated by hatred for Pope John Paul II – in particular, hatred for John Paul’s stand against the “culture of death” as represented by abortion on-demand, “which many of Pius XII’s (and John Paul II’s) liberal critics openly support.”

James Carroll, author of Constantine’s Sword, describes the Church’s dilemma during the Holocaust: *“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. during 'Kulturkampf' in Bismarck's Germany) - 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.'**

*Carroll's contention exemplifies the law of unintended consequences.

On April 8, 1965, Vatican Council II published its 16th document entitled *Nostra Aetate*, ("In Our Age"). With that single act the Church turned its back on 1900 plus years of official and unofficial anti-Judaic teaching and practice. The document directly repudiates and reverses the Church's age-old teachings on Jews as Christ-killers and as the rejected children of God. It declares: "*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 before, during and after 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 have 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 to *legitimize* his regime.

- Two popes, Pius XI and Pius XII, failed to denounce, directly or explicitly, Nazi racist policies against Jews.
- The Vatican did not urge “passive resistance” to unjust racial laws and policies in Germany, Italy or occupied European countries.
- No Catholic Nazi or Nazi collaborator was excommunicated.
- The Vatican assisted Nazi war criminals escape prosecution after WWII
- Church leaders, for the most part, failed to provide “moral” leadership to or assist the faithful in “conscience formation.”
- Christian acts of conscience and courage were the exception, not the rule.

Hitler’s rise to dictatorial power from total obscurity (within a republic, no less!) was by no means a foregone conclusion. There were plenty of opportunities along the way to stop his ascent, *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. His plan included territorial expansion into Western and Eastern Europe and the creation of a “racially pure” society, dominated by *die Herrenrasse*, an Aryan (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 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 requires more than lip service. It requires action ...moral and ethical behavior grounded in love of God and love of neighbor (Lk. 10:27). His primary teaching is encapsulated in: “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (Jn. 15:12). Christians too are required to obey God’s command set forth 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 state law is intrinsically evil, like the Nuremburg Laws of 1935, which stripped Jews of their rights of citizenship and human dignity, a Christian’s duty is clearly and always to obey God’s law. “*Render to Caesar the things that Caesar’s, and render to God, the things that are God’s.*” (Mk. 12:17)

Something 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 also ask: Where was the Church? ... Church as an *institution* and as the *people of God*. The sad and inescapable truth is that the Holocaust would never have happened if more Christians during the 1930's and '40's, and for centuries before, had genuinely *practiced* their faith.

Religion is as religion *does*, all the rest is talk,* which underlies Ellie Wiesel's provocative indictment: "*Christianity died at Auschwitz.*" The challenge for *post-Auschwitz* Christians throughout the world is to prove his indictment wrong.

* **Christopher Hitchens**, an avowed atheist, in his book, God is Not Great, How Religion Poisons Everything published in 2007, contends that organized religion is "*the main source of hatred in the world;*" because it is "*violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism, tribalism, and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children,*" and that accordingly it "*ought to have a great deal on its conscience.*"

One reason it so important to learn about the Holocaust is embodied in **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, it happened in Bosnia and in Rwanda. Moreover, genocide, now euphemistically termed "*ethnic cleansing,*" has happened most recently in the Darfur region of Sudan. And human nature being what it is, it is likely to happen again and again.

Today, more than sixty five years after the Holocaust ended, anti-Semitism is not just a fact of history, it is a current event. Anti-Semitic incidents -- attacks on Jewish people, property, cemeteries, community institutions, and synagogues -- still occur. 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.*" And that's why Jesus cautions his followers: "*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)

January 27, 2011

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.” **Fr. 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

“The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in a period of moral crisis maintain their neutrality.” **Dante**

Background: **Eugenio Pacelli** was a scholarly figure who, his critics contend, feared Bolshevism more than Nazism. One of the goals of Pacelli's ecclesial career, both as Vatican Secretary of State (1930-1939) and then as **Pope Pius XII** (1939-1958), like popes before him, was to preserve and extend the authority of the *institutional* Church. One way he and his predecessors sought to do this was through concordats* (treaties) between the Vatican and 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, early in his ecclesial career, helped to codify.

*Concordats granted to the Church freedom of practice within a country, permitting it, for example, to organize youth groups, make ecclesiastical appointments, run church schools, hospitals, charities, and conduct religious services without state interference. They also ensured that canon law would be recognized within certain spheres (e.g., the validity of marriages and the status of converts to Catholicism).

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 church interests, but, for the most part, unwilling to interfere with “secular” concerns. The Vatican found most aspects of right-wing regimes agreeable, appreciating their patronage of the Church, their opposition to socialism** and atheistic communism and their frequent championing of a *conservative* (anti-modernist) social vision. Fascist regimes, for the most part, were embraced as God-sent bulwarks against the “socialist evil” engulfing Europe. It should be noted the Church, at that time, had a static, classicist, anti-modernist worldview and was still struggling against *liberalism* and other historical forces unleashed by the French Revolution. ***

*Fascism was founded in 1920 in Italy by **Benito Mussolini**. By the end of 1926, Italy had been transformed into a single-party dictatorial state. Fascist regimes eventually came to power in Germany, Romania, Slovakia and Croatia, but virtually every European country produced its own fascist political party. These regimes were nationalistic, anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-Marxist. Heavily reliant on a cult of personality, no fascist regime survived the death of its founder.

**Socialism was viewed as a powerful threat in the late 19th and early 20th centuries within conservative institutions because it opposed the existing European social order and displayed overt hostility toward the Church and clergy. In Italy and elsewhere the influence of the socialist movement and its unions spread quickly, undermining previously unchallenged church functions among the people. The threat only got worse with the Russian Revolution, which *radicalized* socialist forces throughout Europe.

*****John Henry Newman** said: “To live is to change; and to live long is to have changed often.”

A critical factor shaping Vatican policy during the Nazi era was its goal to preserve the Church as an *institution*. The Vatican, still fighting its war against “modernity” championed by **Pope Pius IX** (1846-78) and **St. Pius X** (1903-1914), was committed to preserving classical European social order, seriously threatened by the rise of Bolshevism which, among other things, abolished churches and confiscated their property within Soviet Russia. Despite reservations about aspects of Nazi policy and about Hitler himself shapers of Vatican policy, therefore, saw the Third Reich as the lesser of two evils, i.e. between Nazism and Bolshevism.

This, coupled with anti-Judaism, the Church’s 1900 plus tradition of hostility and practice toward Jews, helps explain why, despite numerous appeals to do so, Pius XII, the wartime pope, refused to issue *explicit* denunciations of the murder of Jews or to call *directly* upon the Nazis to stop the killing. Also fearing schism within the German Roman Catholic Church, Pius steadfastly maintained the Vatican’s position of neutrality* during WWII and declined to associate himself with Allied declarations against Nazi war crimes. The most he would do was 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, like **Monsignor Angelo Roncalli**, the future Pope John XXIII, and **Monsignor Angelo Rotta**,** members of the Vatican diplomatic corps did little better.

*Pius XII maintained Vatican “neutrality” during the war despite the regime’s repeated violations of the Reich Concordat, including

provisions intended to protect converts to Catholicism (see e.g., Sr. Edith Stein, *infra*)

**Rotta has been recognized as a “Righteous Gentile” by the Israeli government at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem. Roncalli’s nomination for this recognition is still pending.

Pius’ critics focus on the quintessential evil that Nazism represented and contend that his *moral* leadership in Christian Europe, as leader of the largest and most influential Christian faith community on earth, should have been clear, forthright and outspoken. “Neutrality” during a time of *egregious* injustice cannot be an option, according to this view, especially, for someone of his high religious stature. His explicit condemnation of Nazi extremism, they argue, would have inspired people of all faith traditions to do more for the victims of the Holocaust, who, at least, would have had the comfort of knowing that the world was not *indifferent* to their plight. They also argue that his role as leader of a sovereign city state with international interests conflicted with his role as the world’s preeminent spiritual leader. Pius’ defenders, on the other hand, contend that making condemnatory public statements would have been ineffectual and resulted in drastic reprisals, making matters worse for Jews and Catholics.

In 1933, as Pope Pius XI’s secretary of state, Pacelli negotiated the Reich Concordat with German diplomat **Franz Von Papen**, signed in July of that year, which, according to Pacelli detractors, not only “neutered” Catholic political opposition to Hitler’s rise to dictatorial power, but also, as first treaty to be negotiated, “legitimized” the Nazi regime.* Pacelli believed, they maintain, that while the Nazis might violate provisions of the Concordat, on balance, the agreement would stabilize the Church’s position in Germany, restoring it to the more favorable status it enjoyed during the “First Reich” under the leadership of **Otto von Bismarck** (1862-1890), first chancellor of unified Germany

*Pius defender **Jose M. Sanchez** terms the Concordat a “*pragmatic and morally defensible measure to protect German Catholics and the relative freedom of the Catholic Church in Germany.*” See Sanchez, [Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy](#)

“Prudence and reserve” characterized the Vatican’s response to worsening conditions for Jews in Germany beginning soon after Hitler’s rise to power in January, 1933. For example, there was no Vatican protest against the state sanctioned boycott of Jewish businesses in April, 1933; or against passage of the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935 which stripped Jews of their citizenship rights. And in November, 1938 there was no Vatican condemnation of **Kristallnacht**, the state-sponsored *pogrom* against Jews in Nazi Germany and Occupied Austria which began the Holocaust. “Prudence and reserve” continued to characterize the Vatican response even when Nazi death camps reached full killing capacity

after 1942. Only when it became clear that the Allies would win the war, critics charge, did the Vatican finally change its policy to a more proactive one.

Susan Zuccotti, author of Under His Very Windows, contends that although some Catholic clergy, religious and laity in October 1943 attempted to rescue Jews who resided in Rome within walking distance of Vatican City, from deportation to Auschwitz, there is no evidence of Pope XII's "guiding hand." Documentary evidence, she argues, shows that Pius knew of the impending deportations, but did little or nothing to stop it. His defenders counter that when church leaders, priests and nuns intervened to protect Jews in Italy and elsewhere in Occupied Europe, they did so because of Pius' *direct* instruction or "inspiration." They credit Pius with saving tens of thousands of Roman Jews, some of whom hid within Vatican City itself.

Pius XII's alleged *silence* and passivity 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 claim.* "Deputy" evokes the papal title -- "Vicar of Christ," implying that, among other things, by not publicly challenging Nazi racist policies, Pius failed in Jesus' *prophetic* role as exemplar of ethical behavior based on love of God and neighbor. His detractors accuse him of everything from anti-Semitism to collusion with the Nazi regime, one of them, **John Cornwell**, even branding him as "Hitler's Pope."

* **Joseph Lichten** in his book, A Question of Judgment, labels any criticism of Pius' actions during World War II as "*a stupefying paradox*" stating, "*no one who reads the record of Pius XII's actions on behalf of Jews can subscribe to Hochhuth's accusation.*"

The Vatican maintains that what it terms a "black legend," has developed since Hochhuth's play premiered, which falsely maligns Pius XII, is without historical foundation and the product of a "bolshevist conspiracy." His defenders, among them, **Rabbi David G. Dalin**, **Pierre Blet S.J.**, **Sr. Margherita Marchione**, **Ralph McInerney**, **Pinchas Lapide**, **Ronald J. Rychlak**, **Jose M. Sanchez** and **Joseph Lichten**, argue that Pius' behind the scenes diplomacy (*realpolitik*) saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives, preventing even a greater catastrophe. Pius' failures whatever they might have been, in their view, were those of a holy man with human shortcomings who was compelled to act in particularly tragic and dangerous circumstances.

His detractors, in short, charge that Pius' actions before and during the Holocaust were influenced more by *politics* than *conscience*. Some contend that he was, in effect, attempting to hedge his bets in the event Hitler won the war. There is currently a movement pending, 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 Pope Benedict to delay Pius' canonization process, at least, 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*.

*Some of his defenders suggest that Pius ought to be named a "Righteous Gentile" by the Israeli government at Yad Vashem.

David Kertzer, one of Pius critics, maintains that what is most important for understanding the Church's role in making the Holocaust possible is not the discovery of what Pius XII did or did not do. Much more important, for Kertzer, is bringing to light the role Pius' predecessors played over previous centuries in dehumanizing Jews and in encouraging Europeans to view them as evil and dangerous. He writes:

"It is only in this context that we can understand why the special legislation that in the 1930's served as a first step toward the Holocaust, making Jews second-class citizens, was greeted with indifference, if not pleasure, by large segments of the European population. Even for the more limited goal of making sense of Pius XII's behavior during the war, we need to understand this longer stretch of history. Only in its light can we understand why, as millions of Jews were being murdered, Pius XII could never bring himself to publicly utter the word 'Jew'"

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

1. Shaping the Pope

a. Eugenio Pacelli was born in Rome in 1876, the year after **Pius IX**'s encyclical challenging **Bismarck**'s attempt to limit church influence in newly unified Germany during *Kulturkampf*,* see *infra*. Raised in a family with close ties to the Vatican,** Pacelli was steeped in the Church's long tradition of anti-modernity, papal *authoritarianism*, and anti-Judaism. His seminary education concentrated on the study of canon law. Like most of his religious contemporaries, he distrusted parliamentary democracy, other aspects of *liberalism*, and equated Judaism with *atheistic* communism ("Judeo-Bolshevism"), viewing them as mortal enemies of the Church.

* The term *Kulturkampf* (literally, "culture struggle") refers to policies promoting secularism, nationalism and anti-clericalism enacted in the 1870's under Bismarck in newly unified German. See Session Three syllabus, "Anti-Judaism spawns anti-Semitism."

**His grandfather was one of the founders of the Vatican newspaper “*L’Osservatore Romano*,” his father, uncle and brother worked in service to the Vatican. The family had a longstanding and deep devotion to the Holy See.

b. Pacelli 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 the first assignments from **Pope Pius X** (1903-14) was to 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, published in 1917, was the cornerstone of Pius X’s program of centralizing ecclesial authority in the papacy, giving to popes unprecedented power over every aspect of church life. 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.*”

*the dogma of papal infallibility applies to faith and morals.

c. Distinguishing himself as a canon lawyer and diplomat, Pacelli was elevated to the rank of cardinal in 1929 and appointed Vatican Secretary of State in 1930. An admitted *Germanophile*, he lived in Germany from 1917, the year of his appointment as papal nuncio (ambassador) 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.*”

Nazism

d. Knowledgeable about Nazi ideology, Pacelli spoke little publicly about Hitler’s racist theories before becoming pope on March 2, 1939. In 1929, however, Pacelli said: “*Hitler is capable of walking on corpses.*” In a 1935 speech, two years after Hitler became chancellor, Pacelli described 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.*” Pacelli in 1937 warned American consul to Berlin, A. W. Klieforth, that Hitler was “*an untrustworthy scoundrel and fundamentally wicked person*” A report written in 1938 by Pacelli for President Franklin Roosevelt and filed with Ambassador Joseph Kennedy declared that the Church regarded compromise with the Third Reich as “*out of the question.*”

Mit Brennender Sorge

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 (1922-39), published on March 10,

1937. The encyclical, written in German, instead of the customary Latin, dealt with church conditions in Germany and criticized Nazism, objecting to various violations of church rights and prerogatives “guaranteed” in the Reich Concordat (see *infra*). The regime, for example, had been arresting nuns and priests, closing convents and monasteries, and harassing parochial school teachers, among other things. Smuggled into Germany, the encyclical was read in all churches on Palm Sunday, 1937. The Nazis burned as many copies of the encyclical that they could confiscate.

*The encyclical not only accused the regime of violating the Reich Concordat, but warned against the “deification of race, nation, and state,” and asserted that Hitler was “deceiving Germans and the international community.” It mentioned “God-given rights;” invoked “human nature that went beyond national borders;” and warned that rejection of the Old Testament, which some religious and secular leaders had advocated, was blasphemous.

It charge that the Hitler 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.*”

Not mentioned, however, were the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which stripped German Jews of their citizenship in the Third Reich. *Mit Brennender Sorge*, moreover, never directly mentioned Nazi racial policy in general or anti-Semitism in particular. Instead of protesting the persecution of Jews, it referred to Jews as those who were “*constantly straying*” from God and who had “*crucified*” Christ.)

Mit Brennender Sorge, the first official denunciation of Hitler made by any major institution, resulted in further persecution of the Church in Germany, e.g. the Nazis closed down religious presses and took additional punitive measures, including staging a series of immorality trials of Catholic clergy. Pius’ defenders point to this and similar retaliatory measures taken by the regime as proof that making condemnatory public statements would have been counterproductive.*

*Another measure cited by his defenders is what happened in the Netherlands in July 1942 when the Bishop of Utrecht’s protest of deportation of Dutch Jews resulted in accelerated deportation.

In June 1941, Pacelli, then Pius XII, commenting in a letter to the Bishop of Passau on the regime’s continuing violations of the Reich Concordat said: “*The history of the ‘Reichskonkordat’ shows, that the other side lacked the most basic prerequisites to accept minimal freedoms and rights of the Church, without which the Church simply cannot live and operate, formal agreements notwithstanding.*”

f. In 1938, at an International Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest, while Hungarian legislature was in the process of promulgating anti-Jewish legislation (patterned after the Nuremberg Laws) Pacelli, as presiding papal legate, addressed the Congress referring to Jews “*whose lips curse (Christ) and whose hearts reject him even today.*” Pacelli was elected pope on March 2, 1939.

Kristallnacht

g. Although fully briefed by the papal nuncio to Berlin about *Kristallnacht*, “*the Night of Broken Glass*,” the regime sanctioned *pogrom* that took place in November, 1938 throughout Germany and Occupied Austria, neither Pacelli, as secretary of state, nor Pope Pius XI, issued a public protest. Some critics charge that it was Pacelli who dissuaded Pius XI, nearing death at the time, from condemning the event.*

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

Gunter Lewy, author of *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* describes Vatican’s passivity after *Kristallnacht*: “*The hands-off policy of the Church stood out especially in the fateful days of November 1938. The Nazis, in the wake of the assassination of a German embassy official in Paris by a seventeen-year-old Jewish boy (Herschel Grynszpan), unleashed a pogrom that has entered history under the name ‘Kristallnacht.’ During the night of November 9-10 the display windows of Jewish shops all over Germany were shattered, about 20,000 male Jews were arrested and herded into concentration camps, 191 synagogues were set on fire and 76 others completely destroyed. . . Thirty-six Jews were killed during this well-organized action; a much larger number succumbed to the sadistic treatment meted out to them in Buchenwald and other concentration camps where they were imprisoned. (The reaction of the Catholic Church was that) the bishops remained silent in the face of the burning temples and the first round-up of the Jews.*” Lewy, p. 284

Bolshevism

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

“The Hidden Encyclical”

i. Upon becoming pope in March 1939, Pius XII had a momentous decision to make -- what to do with the deceased Pius XI’s draft encyclical, *Humani Generis Unitas*,* in which, for the first time, the Church would *publicly* and *explicitly* condemn Nazi anti-Semitism and call for an end to the persecution of Jews. According to one critic, Pius XII decided 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. Although choosing not to issue it, he did use selected parts of it in his inaugural encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, see *infra*.

* “*Humani Generis Unitas*” 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.*”

Pius’ critics argue that *Humani Generis Unitas* is a significant example of a lost opportunity that might have pressured the regime to stop or, at least, mitigate its persecution of Jews.

j. In October 1939, in his first encyclical, “*Summi Pontificatus*,” Pius XII warned against theories which deny the unity of the human race and warned against the deification of the State, all of which he saw as leading to an “*hour of darkness.*” *Summi Pontificatus*, however, is more significant for what it did not say. It did not condemn Nazi anti-Semitism, call for the cessation of Jewish 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.

* After the war **Jacques Maritain**, a prominent French Catholic philosopher, became an exponent of emerging Christian Democracy in Europe and assisted in the drafting the U. N.’s “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Having tried unsuccessfully to convince Pius XII to speak out against the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, Maritain *resigned* his post as French ambassador to the Vatican in 1948, citing Pius’s “inaction” on the issue of German guilt.

2. The Reich Concordat

a. One of Pacelli’s objectives as Vatican secretary of state was to negotiate concordats to define church-state relations in Germany and other countries. The Reich Concordat was one of four concordats he concluded with various German States. “State” concordats were necessary because the Weimar constitution gave to German states

authority in the areas of education and culture, thereby diminishing church authority in these areas. Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933. On July 20th of that year, Pacelli signed the Reich Concordat which purported to grant “freedom of religious practice” to Catholics in Germany.* Among the Concordat’s provisions, the German Catholic Church was granted freedom to administer religious schools, church associations and religious publications *without state interference*.** In return, the Church agreed not to interfere in “political” matters, which, according to critics, in effect, banned organized Catholic political activity in the Third Reich. As a consequence, they argue, the Church granted German Catholics its *imprimatur* to cooperate with the new regime, and even to join the Nazi party.***

*The Reich Concordat was patterned after the **Lateran Treaty** of 1929 between the Vatican and fascist Italy which Pacelli's brother, Francesco, had successfully negotiated with Mussolini. A precondition of those negotiations was the dissolution of the Italian Catholic Popular Party.

** Between 1933 and 1939, Pacelli lodged 55 protests for violations of the Reich Concordat by the regime. Early in 1937, Pacelli asked several German bishops, including **Bishop Michael von Faulhaber** of Munich, to help him write a letter of protest which became the basis of “*Mit Brennender Sorge*.”

***Prior to 1933, some German clerics warned the faithful about Nazi racism. In certain dioceses it was forbidden for Catholics to join the Nazi party; some priests and bishops even refused to administer the sacraments to party members (a form of *excommunication*). Relatively few Catholics voted for Hitler or Nazi party candidates during parliamentary elections between 1930 and 1933.

Hitler, as an astute politician, was well aware of the Concordat’s value to his regime. In a letter dated July 23, 1933 he wrote: “*The fact that the Vatican is concluding a treaty with the new Germany means the acknowledgement of the National Socialist state by the Catholic Church. This treaty shows the whole world clearly and unequivocally that the assertion that National Socialism is hostile to religion is a lie.*”

John Cornwell* describes the effect of the Reich Concordat:

“*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 charges, was interested primarily in advancing the Church’s *institutional* interests in general and enhancing papal power in particular.

* N.b. Five years *after* the publication of Hitler's Pope, Cornwell stated: “I would now argue, in the light of the debates and evidence following *Hitler's Pope*, that Pius XII had so little scope of action that it is impossible to judge the motives for his silence during the war, while Rome was under the heel of Mussolini and later occupied by Germany.”

b. On September 2, 1933 **Bishop Adolf Bertram** of Breslau (Breslau is now located in Poland), 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.*” Emphasis mine.

The Catholic Center Party

c. The **Catholic Center Party**, founded in 1870 when Otto von Bismarck was chancellor of newly unified Germany, had functioned as a *democratic* counterweight to the rise of Nazism. In 1919 the Center Party polled six million votes, second only to the Social Democrats. Occupying the contested middle ground of the Weimar Republic’s political spectrum in the mounting chaos of the period, the Center Party provided five chancellors in the ten governments from 1919 to 1933. The Center Party opposed legislation aimed at Jews and its leaders consistently rejected the gutter anti-Semitism that more and more infected public discourse as the German economy faltered.

Some historians speculate that if the Center Party had continued to exist in Germany, Hitler's rise to absolute power might have been delayed or prevented. John Cornwell writes that the Reich Concordat ensured that whatever Catholic resistance to Nazi fascism arose would be “*isolated and impotent.*”^{*} The way was clearer, according to him, for the Nazi regime to pursue its racist policies 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 a diplomatic victory for Hitler. It made him, in the colorful German saying, “*salonfähig*” (“*fit for association with decent people.*”)

*Hitler, speaking to **Bishop Michael 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.*”

The Vatican’s position, on the contrary, is that the Catholic Center Party had already collapsed as a political force in Germany before the Reich Concordat was signed.

In his New Year’s message on January 1, 1934 Hitler said:

“*While we destroyed the (Catholic) Center Party, we have not only brought thousands of priests back into the Church, but to millions of respectable people we have restored their faith in their religion and in their priests. The union of the Evangelical Church in a single Church for the whole Reich, the Concordat with the Catholic Church, these are but milestones on the road which leads to the establishment of a useful relation and a useful co-operation between the Reich and the two Confessions.*”

“*I know that here and there the objection has been raised: Yes, but you have deserted Christianity. No, it is not that we have deserted Christianity; it is those who came before us who deserted Christianity. We have only carried through a clear division between politics, which have to do with terrestrial things, and religion, which must concern itself with the celestial sphere. There has been no interference with the doctrine of the Confessions or with their religious freedom, nor will there be any such interference. On the contrary the State protects religion, though always on the one condition that religion will not be used as a cover for political ends.*”

“*There may have been a time when even parties founded on the ecclesiastical basis were a necessity. At that time Liberalism was opposed to the Church, while Marxism was anti-religious. But that time is past. National Socialism neither opposes the church, nor is it anti-religious, but on the contrary, it stands on the ground of a real Christianity.*”

d. By banning Catholic political activity in Germany, the Reich Concordat also “neutered” Catholic labor unions and similar Catholic grass roots organizations, leading James Carroll, author of Constantine’s Sword, to term it 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 had urged “**passive resistance**”^{*} to that legislation and threatened to **excommunicate** any Catholic, including priests, who cooperated with the Bismarck regime’s anti-church policies. As a consequence, the German Church not only survived the threat to its institutional interests, but prospered until the end of WWI and the rise of the Weimar Republic. The future Pius XII, on the other hand, Carroll argues, “*capitulated*” to Hitler, thereby enabling Nazism to rise unopposed by “*the most powerful Catholic community in the world.*” Carroll concludes that in negotiating the Concordat, Pacelli 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. Annexation of Poland (September, 1939)

a. When Nazi Germany invaded and annexed Poland in September 1939, beginning WWII, Pius XII refused to condemn the action publically. His refusal was regarded as “betrayal” by many Polish Catholics, including clergy, who saw his appointment of Hilarius Breitinger as apostolic administrator for the *Wartheland*^{*} in May 1942 as “implicit recognition” of the breakup of Poland.

^{*}*Wartheland* is the name given by the Nazis to the territory of Greater Poland which was occupied, annexed and directly incorporated into the Greater Third Reich after defeating the Polish army in 1939.

b. **Michael Phayer**, author of *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*, argues that Pius XII — both before and during his papacy — consistently “*deferred to Germany at the expense of Poland*”, and saw Germany — not Poland — as critical to “*rebuilding a large Catholic presence in Central Europe.*”

c. In his first encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* (October 20, 1939), Pius XII addressed the issue of the invasion, occupation, and partition of Poland pursuant to the Nazi-Soviet Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. It read in pertinent part:

“The blood of countless human beings, even noncombatants, raises a piteous dirge over a nation such as Our dear Poland, which, for its

...fidelity to the Church, for its services in the defense of Christian civilization, written in indelible characters in the annals of history, has a right to the generous and brother sympathy of the whole world, while it awaits, relying on the powerful intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, the hour of a resurrection in harmony with the principles of justice and true peace.”

d. His defenders maintain that the fact Pius failed to denounce publicly the killing of hundreds of priests and millions of Catholics in Poland demonstrates that he was not anti-Semitic in failing to condemn the killing of Jews.

4. Edith Stein-- Saint and Martyr

a. **Edith Stein**, a German Jewish convert to Catholicism, became a nun in 1934. “Deported” in 1942 along with other Jews from the Netherlands, she died at Auschwitz and was canonized as **Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross** (her monastic name) by Pope John Paul II in 1998. In April 1933 (during Holy Week) she wrote a prophetic letter to Pope Pius XI, in which she denounced the Nazi regime and asked him to denounce the regime “*to put a stop to this abuse of Christ's name.*” The letter read in pertinent part:

“As a child of the Jewish people who, by the grace of God, for the past eleven years has also been a child of the Catholic Church, I dare to speak to the Father of Christianity about that which oppresses millions of Germans. For weeks we have seen deeds perpetrated in Germany which mock any sense of justice and humanity, not to mention love of neighbor. For years the leaders of National Socialism have been preaching hatred of the Jews. Now that they have seized the power of government and armed their followers, among them proven criminal elements, this seed of hatred has germinated.

...But through boycott measures – by robbing people of their livelihood, civic honor and fatherland – it drives many to desperation; within the last week, through private reports I was informed of five cases of suicide as a consequence of these hostilities. I am convinced that this is a general condition which will claim many more victims. One may regret that these unhappy people do not have greater inner strength to bear their misfortune. But the responsibility must fall, after all, on those who brought them to this point and it also falls on those who keep silent in the face of such happenings.

Everything that happened and continues to happen on a daily basis originates with a government that calls itself “Christian.” For weeks not only Jews but also thousands of faithful Catholics in Germany, and, I believe, all over the world, have been waiting and hoping for the Church of Christ to raise its voice to stop this abuse of Christ's name. Is not this

idolization of race and governmental power which is being pounded into the public consciousness by the radio open heresy? Isn't the effort to destroy Jewish blood an abuse of the holiest humanity of our Savior, of the most blessed Virgin and the apostles? Is not all this diametrically opposed to the conduct of our Lord and Savior, who, even on the cross, still prayed for his persecutors. And isn't this a black mark on the record of this Holy Year which was intended to be a year of peace and reconciliation? ”

“We all, who are faithful children of the Church and who see the conditions in Germany with open eyes, fear the worst for the prestige of the Church, if the silence continues any longer. We are convinced that his silence will not be able in the long run to purchase peace with the present German government. For the time being, the fight against Catholicism will be conducted quietly and less brutally than against Jewry, but no less systematically. It won't take long before no Catholic will be able to hold office in Germany unless he dedicates himself unconditionally to the new course of action.... (Signed) Dr. Edith Stein

b. Edith Stein's letter was written as the Reich Concordat was being negotiated. The Concordat was signed in July, 1933. Her letter received no official reply from the Vatican, and it not known for certain whether Pius XI even read it. Pacelli, as Vatican Secretary of State, however, sent a “sympathetic reply” to Stein's abbess, stating: *“I leave it to you to inform the sender (Edith Stein) in an opportune way that her letter has been dutifully presented to His Holiness.”*

5. Papal Power

Background: The Church is the oldest continuously functioning institution in the world and, for centuries, one of the world's most powerful – a force capable of moving armies, inspiring saints, and shaping the lives of many millions of its adherents. The Church steered Western civilization through historical events like 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. 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 Western Europe during the Middle Ages (from the 4th to the 15th 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 and influence.

Throughout history, the Church has influenced political ideas and challenged powerful secular leaders. 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 19th 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. 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). Pope Pius VII excommunicated Napoleon Bonaparte in 1809. Pius IX excommunicated King Victor Emmanuel of newly unified Italy. In the 20th 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.

For close to two millennia, 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 moral 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, however, that of the 265 popes that have reigned to date, not all of them 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 incompetent, some learned, some visionary, some narrow-minded. From 217 to 1447, moreover, there have been 30 plus “*antipopes.*”

*When **Josef Stalin** (1878-1953), the brutal dictator of the Soviet Union, was advised that Pope Pius XII opposed his policies, Stalin derisively replied: “*How many divisions has the pope?*” A half-century later in November, 1989, when without a bullet being fired, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, Eastern Europe came out from behind the Iron Curtain and the Soviet empire fell, Stalin’s successor, **Mikhail Gorbachev**, made this admission: “*Everything that happened in Eastern Europe in these last few years would have been impossible without (Pope) John Paul II.*” Stalin failed to realize that a pope can, indeed, influence historical events even without commanding armed forces!

a. As pope, Pius XII held three official positions, i.e. 1) supreme pontiff, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, a supra-national power in Europe for many centuries, with a network of bishops, priests, and other religious men and women throughout the world, all loyal to him; 2) Chief of State of Vatican City,* with his own diplomatic corps, newspaper and radio station; and 3) Bishop of Rome, the Eternal City, symbolic seat of Christianity.

* Vatican City is a landlocked sovereign “city-state” whose territory consists of a walled enclave within the city of Rome. It has an area of approximately 110 acres, and a population of just over 800.

b. Pius’ views, cloaked in divine authority and bolstered by the dogma of *papal infallibility** on matters of faith and *morals* could influence 400 million Roman Catholics worldwide, including, those in Nazi Germany and Occupied Europe, which was predominately Christian (43% Roman Catholic). Moreover, as spiritual leader** of the world’s largest religion, his views could influence non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians as well. As pope and “Vicar of Christ,” Pius was the world’s most visible and influential religious leader, the *pre-eminent* “shepherd of the flock” and “exemplar” of morality.

* Since the solemn declaration of *papal infallibility* as church doctrine by Vatican Council I on July 18, 1870 under the strong leadership of Pius IX, this power has been used only once. Pius XII explicitly invoked it in 1950 regarding the dogma of the Assumption of Mary.

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

c. Among Pius’ papal powers were: access to the 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 information gathering and communication capability of a worldwide diplomatic corps; 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 set 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 Pius IX did 60 years earlier during *Kulturkampf*. 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, he did *not* publicly denounce the *industrialized* killing, thereby failing, his critics contend, to provide “people of conscience” with the facts necessary to make *informed* moral judgments* 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

e. Excommunication

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

*Pius defender David G. Dalin contends that excommunicating Hitler would have been a purely “symbolic” gesture that “would likely have resulted in more persecution, not less.” Dalin, *ibid*, p.77. Dalin does agree, however, that excommunication in the past had been an effective church weapon, at least, temporarily, as when in 1077 Pope Gregory VII’s excommunication brought Roman Emperor Henry IV to Canossa on his knees.

f. 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 outside Italy; or publicly protesting or explicitly instructing anyone to *rescue* Jews in Rome.

Goldhagen speculates 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.

6. Pleas for Help

a. Throughout the Holocaust, the Vatican received pleas for help on behalf of persecuted Jews. 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 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 Slovakia, then ruled by fascist dictator and priest **Fr. Joseph Tiso**, see *infra*, reported that Slovak Jews were being deported to death camps. In each instance, Pius XII failed to respond.*

*Pius’ defenders dispute that Pius failed to intervene by attempting to stop deportations. His critics, however, contend that any such attempts occurred only *after* it became apparent that the Allies would win the war.

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.*

*Three million Catholics in Poland were slaughtered *despite* Vatican neutrality!

c. In late August 1942, after more than 200,000 Ukrainian Jews had 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. **Fr. Wladislaw Racziewicz**, a priest and president of the Polish government-in-exile, appealed to the Pius in January 1943 to denounce publicly Nazi atrocities in

Poland, (also being inflicted on millions of Catholic Poles.) **Bishop Konrad Preysing** of Berlin requested, at least twice, that Pius condemn Nazi excesses in Germany. In each instance there was no response from the Vatican.

f. As Jews were outside its “circle of concern,” see *supra*, the Vatican seldom opposed Jewish mistreatment before or during the Holocaust. When official statements in opposition to Nazi extremes were made, they usually urged acting with “*justice and charity*,” and disapproving of “*excesses*.”

7. “Neutrality” and “Silence”

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

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

“*Silence gives consent.*” **Pope Boniface VIII (1012-24)**

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

a. During WWII, Pius, as head of the sovereign city state of Vatican City, followed a policy of “neutrality” mirroring what **Pope Benedict XV** did during WWI. 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, as noted previously, that Pius, as an *anti-modernist* who distrusted Western parliamentary democracy and opposed communism, feared Bolshevism more than Nazism.

b. After 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 mass killing.* 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.” As was his pattern, however, he did not mention the word “Jew(s)” by name.

*As proof that Pius spoke out against the Nazis, his defenders cite this “New York Times” editorial published on December 25, 1941:

“The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas. He is about the only one who dares to raise his voice at all.”

d. In 1941, after **Marshal Philippe Petain*** of Vichy France questioned whether the Vatican would object to anti-Jewish laws, patterned after the Nuremberg 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 “puppet” 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 spoke about Vatican neutrality,* but stated that where *morality* was involved, no neutrality was possible. (Taken at face value that would seem to imply that a national policy of genocide during wartime was not a moral issue... surely an absurd conclusion!) Despite the Nazi regime’s repeated violations of the Reich Concordat, as noted previously, the Vatican continued to maintain its wartime policy.

*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. **Guenter Lewy** writes about Pius’ “silence:”

“When Dr. Eduardo Senatro, the correspondent of L'Osservatore Romano in Berlin, asked Pius XII whether he would not protest the extermination of the Jews, the Pope is reported to have answered, ‘Dear friend, do not forget that millions of Catholics serve in the German armies. Shall I bring them into conflicts of conscience?’ The Pope knew that German Catholics were not prepared to suffer martyrdom for their

*Church; still less were they willing to incur the wrath of their Nazi rulers for the sake of the Jews whom their own bishops for years had castigated as a harmful influence in German life. In the final analysis... the Vatican's silence only reflected the deep feeling of the Catholic masses of Europe – those of Germany and Eastern Europe in particular. – The failure of the Pope was a measure of the Church's failure to convert her gospel of brotherly love and human dignity into living reality... One of the principal reasons given by the Vatican for the silence of the Pope Pius XII was that “the Holy See did not want to jeopardize its neutrality.” Guenter Lewy, *ibid.*, p. 304*

g. In April 1943, Pius wrote to Bishop Preysing of Berlin: “We give to the pastors who are working on the local level the duty of determining if and to what degree the danger of reprisals and of various forms of oppression occasioned by episcopal (church) declarations... *ad maiora mala vitanda* (“to avoid worse”)... seem to advise caution. Here lies one of the reasons, why We impose self-restraint on Ourselves in our speeches; the experience, that we made in 1942 with papal addresses, which We authorized to be forwarded to the Believers, justifies our opinion, as far as We see.... The Holy See has done whatever was in its power, with charitable, financial and moral assistance. To say nothing of the substantial sums which we spent in American money for the fares of immigrants.”*

*His defenders note that Pius spent his own money to help defray the cost of Jewish refugees fleeing to Brazil.

8. Italian Jews and the Holocaust

a. Before 1938, fascist Italy, under the leadership of Benito Mussolini, had no national policy regarding Jews in Italy. 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 society. It was not uncommon for Italian Jews to marry Catholics. In general, most Italians considered Jews to be friends and neighbors. Some Jews even joined the Italian Fascist Party out of patriotism.

b. In 1938, however, Mussolini, under pressure from Hitler, initiated an anti-Jewish campaign entitled “**Manifesto of Italian Racism**,” which declared Italians to be part of the “pure race.” Racial laws, similar to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, were then enacted in Italy, as they would be enacted in Occupied Austria, France, Slovakia and Croatia. The Vatican made no protest except regarding provisions which impacted specific church functions. “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 Italian 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's rule 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 (22% Catholic), along with the most zealous of Mussolini's supporters (overwhelmingly Catholic), began rounding up Jews in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Trieste, and other northern cities.

d. In September, 1943, Nazi troops occupied Rome. According to documentary evidence, in October, 1943 Pius XII was made aware that deportation of Jews from Italy was impending. Publicly, the Pope remained *silent*. Privately, his defenders claim, although aware of a Nazi plot to kidnap or assassinate him, Pius instructed his clergy to provide refuge for Jews. Within Vatican City itself 477 Jews were sheltered and another 4,238 Jews were sheltered in Roman monasteries and convents.*

* 40,000 Italian Jews (80%) survived the Holocaust because ordinary Italians, 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. Pius' defenders contend that the Pope should be credited for Italy's relatively high Jewish survival rate. David G. Dalin, as noted previously, even argues the Pius, for his efforts to save Jewish lives, deserves to be recognized as a "Righteous Gentile" by the Israeli government at Yad Vashem, see *infra*.

e. On October 16, 1943, the Nazis rounded up 1,007 Roman Jews, the majority of whom were women and children, as they exited from Yom Kippur services, and amassed them in the piazza adjacent to Rome's historic synagogue, located within walking distance of the papal apartments in St. Peter's Square. Ironically, the piazza, located within the Jewish *ghetto*, first built in Rome by decree of **Pope IV** in the 16th century, contained one of Rome's many churches, *Santa Maria del Pianto* ("St. Mary of Sorrow"). A convoy of trucks, taking a route along the Tiber River 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 out of 42,500 were deported from Italy to Nazi death camps during the Nazi occupation -- most of whom 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. Susan Zuccotti contends that the claims of Pius defenders like **Pinchas Lapide** that 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 be allowed to remain in internment on Italian soil. He did not do so.”** (Zuccotti, Under His Very Windows, p. 294).

* On 28 October 1943, **Ernest von Weizsacker**, German Ambassador to the Vatican, in a telegram to Berlin wrote “...*the Pope has not yet let himself be persuaded to make an official condemnation of the deportation of the Roman Jews.... Since it is currently thought that the Germans will take no further steps against the Jews in Rome, the question of our relations with the Vatican may be considered closed.*”

**Pius defenders, as noted previously, contend that Pius should be credited with explicitly *instructing* or, at least, *inspiring* rescuers of Jews in Italy and Occupied Europe.

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!*”

9. 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 issued no condemnation of the state sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses in 1933; the Nuremburg Laws of 1935; or of *Kristallnacht* in November 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 the *converted* Jews reverted to practicing Judaism.

*His defenders note, as noted previously, that Pius spent his own money to help defray the cost of their flight to fleeing to Brazil.

c. In the spring of 1940, a group of German generals seeking to overthrow Hitler and make peace with the British approached Pope Pius XII, who agreed to act as a negotiator between the British and the planners of the abortive plot.

d. Pius XII, on occasion, did intervene on behalf of Jews, albeit behind the scenes. *Late* in the war (1944), for example, he, along with his papal nuncio to Budapest, **Monsignor Angelo Rotta**, urged the fascist “Arrow Cross” regime in Occupied Hungary to moderate its treatment of Jews. Pius protested repeatedly against the deportation of Jews from Hungary. His protests, combined with those from the King of Sweden, the

International Red Cross, Great Britain and the United States did result in halting deportations on July 8, 1944,* evidencing, *contrary* to claims of his defenders, that papal intervention could, in fact, achieve favorable results without provoking Nazi reprisals.

*Unfortunately by that time, 450,000 Hungarian Jews had already been exterminated

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

f. 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 the assistance did not mean the Pope supported Zionism.

10. Politics behind Papal Policy

a. The Concordats negotiated with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, obligating the Church to steer clear of “political” issues, were cited as a primary *constraint* against Vatican protests of Mussolini’s and Hitler’s race policies.*

*Why the Vatican felt compelled to continue to honor its obligations under the Reich Concordat while the Nazi regime routinely violated its obligations is an anomaly which has not been satisfactorily explained to date.

b. A number of his critics contend that one 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, as noted previously, Pius increased his efforts on behalf of Jews. In late 1942, for example, he began to advise German and Hungarian bishops that it would be prudent to go on record speaking out against the Holocaust. This, critics charge, demonstrates that the real motive behind Pius’ intervention, after it began to seem more and more likely that the Axis would lose the war, 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’ fictionalized 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 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 excesses because he believed doing so would cause Jews more harm than good.* **Jose M. Sanchez**, for example, points out that after the Bishop of Utrecht protested Jewish deportations from the Netherlands in 1942, the Nazis began rounding up Jewish converts (to Catholicism), including Edith Stein, see *supra*, as well as non-converted Jews.

* Two-thirds of European Jewry and one third of world Jewry were slaughtered during the Holocaust. One wonders how much worse it could have been if Pius had spoken publicly? Especially since the Nazis continued killing Jews at a feverish pace even when they knew the war was lost!

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

11. 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 to date, 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 of the full extent of Nazi excesses. A letter from **Bishop Konrad von Preysing** 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, i.e. “*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 nonetheless assisting Jews to flee there.*

*The Vatican did not officially recognize the State of Israel, founded in 1948, until 1994, close to fifty years later. Ironically, the Vatican was first to recognize Nazi Germany in 1933, within months of its founding.

d. The Vatican’s claim that it needed to remain neutral has also been challenged. In January of 2001, a document was discovered in which **Monsignor Giovanni Montini**, the future Pope Paul VI, who served in the secretariat of state, denounced several abuses committed by the Soviet Army against German nationals 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 with Pius, who was then Vatican secretary of state, the issue of Nazi mistreatment of Jews. 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 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 **Archbishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli**,* papal nuncio in Bulgaria and Istanbul (the 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 Jewish escapees from Auschwitz that documented the mass murder occurring there. Roncalli forwarded the report to the Vatican, which claimed it did not know about the report until October 1944. Earlier, Roncalli had written to **Fr. Joseph Tiso**, priest and fascist leader of Slovakia, (who was executed for war crimes after the war), at the request of Barlas asking Tiso to halt the deportations. **

*Roncalli is credited with saving tens of thousands of Hungarian and Slovakian Jews from deportation by providing them transit visas to

Palestine obtained from the British authorities. He also provided thousands of counterfeit baptismal certificates.

Pius defenders contend that Roncalli interceded at Pius' explicit request. German political theorist and philosopher, **Hannah Arendt, however, has been reported to have said when Roncalli in 1963, then Pope John XXIII, was asked what was to be done about "The Deputy" and its controversial portray of Pius XII, Pope John responded: "*Do against it? What can you do against the truth?*"

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

*Pius defenders contend that the letter is either an *erroneous* translation and/or a *forgery*.

12. "Ratlines" (Nazi War Criminal Escape Routes)

a. At the end of World War II during Pius' pontificate, the Vatican aided in the escape of hundreds of Nazi war criminals from Europe by, among other things, issuing them fake passports and providing escape routes. The escape routes, so-called "rat lines," involved a network of European monasteries used to harbor escapees. Numerous perpetrators were assisted in fleeing from Germany and German Occupied Countries to South America, particularly Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil and Chile. Mass murderers **Klaus Barbie** (the Gestapo "Butcher of Lyon," responsible for the torture and death of countless people) and **Ante Pavelic** (fascist leader of the Croatian *Ustasha* regime, responsible for hundreds of thousands of murders of Orthodox Serbs and Jews), see, *infra*, were delivered to the port of Buenos Aires disguised as priests. Barbie and others went on to become expert advisers to South American dictators in techniques of repression and torture perfected by the Nazis.

Bishop Alois Hudal

b. Among church leaders involved in "ratlines" was **Bishop Alois Hudal**, rector of the German Pontifical Institute (*Pontificio Istituto Teutonico*) Santa Maria dell' Anima in Rome, a seminary for Austrian and German priests, and spiritual director of "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*" In December 1944 the Vatican assigned Hudal to a newly created position for ministry to "German-speaking civil internees in Italy."

Hudal used this position to aid the escape of Nazi war criminals, including **Franz Stangl**, commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka, both death camps; **Gustav Wagner**, successor commandant of Sobibor; **Alois Brunner**, responsible for the Drancy internment camp near Paris and in charge of deportations from Slovakia, **Kurt Christmann**, commander of an *Einsatzgruppen* mobile killing squad, which slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews in the Soviet Union; **Walter Rauff**, in charge of developing the mobile gas vans used in the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews; **Dr. Josef Mengele**, S.S. officer and physician at Auschwitz known as the “*Angel of Death*,” and the notorious **Adolf Eichmann**,* who, known as the “*architect of the Holocaust*,” coordinated the annihilation of millions of Jews. 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

* Eichmann, who arrived safely in Argentina, decided to designate himself in his new passport as “Catholic,” even though he was Protestant. He explained: “*I recall with deep gratitude the aid given to me by Catholic priests in my flight from Europe and decided to honor the Catholic faith by becoming an honorary member.*”

In 1960 Eichmann was captured by Israeli Mossad operatives in Argentina and abducted to Israel to face trial in an Israeli court on 15 criminal charges, including crimes against humanity and war crimes. Found guilty, he was executed by hanging in 1962.

In his memoirs Bishop 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.*” As justification for his actions he explained:

“*The Allies’ War against Germany was not a crusade, but the rivalry of economic complexes for whose victory they had been fighting. This so-called business ... used catchwords like democracy, race, religious liberty and Christianity as bait for the masses. All these experiences were the reason why I felt duty bound after 1945 to devote my whole charitable work mainly to former National Socialists and Fascists, especially to so-called ‘war criminals’.*”

13. 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 50th 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**

14. 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 (**Humani Generis Unitas**.) 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, part of the “black legend” that emerged after The Deputy. On his May 2009 visit to Jerusalem, Pope Benedict XVI refused to visit the site where the caption and photo is located.

15. “*Nostra Aetate*” Repudiates Anti-Judaism

a. On April 8th, 1965 Vatican Council II published its 16th 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.

16. What Might Have Been?

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

a. Neither a demon nor an angel, Pius XII’s 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 Nazi 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, in the manner of Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr., urged *passive resistance* to unjust race 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 would have been inspired to engage in resistance and rescue. One can only speculate how many more Christians might have acted with compassion toward Jews and other victims, in accord with Jesus’ gospel of love, *if* Pius and his predecessors had lived up to their 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’ tepid response to the Holocaust – from anti-Semitism; preservation of papal authority; fear of Nazi reprisals; fixation with diplomacy; fear of kidnapping or assassination; 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. 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 a human catastrophe of unprecedented dimension.

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.*” 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... 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

II. The Holocaust in Germany (1938-45)

“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**

“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.”

Pastor Martin Niemoller

“By warding off the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord’s work”

Adolph Hitler

Background: The Holocaust erupted in Germany in November, 1938 during *Kristallnacht*, but its seeds were planted many centuries earlier. A confluence of factors caused it to happen, among them:

- An evil and charismatic leader
- Chaotic conditions
- Public discontent
- Masterful use of propaganda
- A brutal totalitarian regime
- The “fog of war”
- State sponsored terrorism
- Territorial expansionism

- *Anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism*
- Extreme nationalism/patriotism
- Blind obedience
- A *paralysis* of will
- Lack of moral leadership
- 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 appeared to be winning the war. Then, in November 1918, seemingly without warning, the proverbial roof caved in. Inexplicably to many Germans, Germany *lost* the war. Following the abdication of **Kaiser Wilhelm**, leftist and centrist “outsider” political parties created the **Weimar Republic**, imposing democracy on a people with no preparation for it. The victorious Allies had forced the newly created democratic Weimar government to sign the **Versailles Treaty** of 1919, with a preponderance of *humiliating* terms for Germany,* and to begin its political life carrying a staggering financial debt of reparations (33 billion in 1921 dollars). The Weimar constitution was “progressive,” granting universal suffrage, a bill of rights, a commitment to a welfare state and a radical system of proportional representation. This latter feature, however, led to a proliferation of political parties (more than thirty-five by 1928), which made governing very difficult.** The centrist government had to deal with threats of recession and runaway inflation, as well numerous other problems including high unemployment and social unrest.

*Of over 400 provisions in the Versailles Treaty, most of which were punitive toward Germany, one of the most important and controversial required the defeated nation to accept sole responsibility for causing the war and, under the terms of articles 231–248 (later known as the **War Guilt** clauses), to disarm, limit its army to 100,000 men, make substantial territorial concessions, i.e. the loss of its colonies and loss of control over German land areas including the **Rhineland, Alsace-Lorraine, West Prussia** and the province of **Saarland**.

**An example of the law of unintended consequences.

The postwar period (especially from 1919 to 1924) was plagued with political instability and social unrest as extremist parties of the left and right vied with centrist parties for power. WWI had widened divisions in German society and the new democratic regime had to deal with revolutionary forces from within, unleashed by the **Russian Revolution** of 1917, spearheaded by Germany’s own Communist Party, many of whose members were Jewish. As occurred so many times in history, Jews were once again made the *scapegoats*, this time -- for Germany’s defeat in WWI (*Der Dolchstoß* “Stab in the Back”) and for the ensuing social, political and economic chaos that plagued the Weimar Republic.

Among the chaotic conditions were -- *hyperinflation* in 1923, which made Germany's currency, the *deutschmark*, virtually worthless; the harsh economic stabilization measures of 1924; the worldwide **Great Depression** of 1929 and the many failed businesses and skyrocketing unemployment it caused; together with rampant popular discontent, often erupting into street riots between rival political parties and their bands of thugs. There were numerous assassination attempts of political leaders and *coups d'état* on the left and right, including Hitler's failed "Beer Hall Putsch" in 1923; nine cabinet changes occurred between 1919 and 1923. In January 1923, French and Belgian armies occupied the industrial heartland of Germany, the Ruhr Valley, claiming that Germany had failed to make reparations payments called for by Versailles Treaty. A relatively minor extremist political party, the **National Socialist German Workers' Party** (aka Nazi Party), under the leadership of an obscure former Austrian army corporal, **Adolph Hitler**, emerged out of the chaos and soon began to exploit the volatile situation, by, among other things, employing to great effect... *negative* political campaigning and newly developed "manipulative" propaganda techniques, pioneered by **Joseph Goebbels**.

The Nazis cleverly and calculatingly crafted their party platform to appeal to the discontent of the German people, promising improved conditions, including a better way of life and their nation's ascent to its rightful glory and place on the world stage. Anti-Semitism laced with fear, undergirded by Christian anti-Judaism, was a major plank of their platform. Hitler, although thoroughly amoral, cynically cloaked himself in religiosity, as his rhetoric and writings amply demonstrated. Despite repeated electoral failures, the Nazi Party in early 1933 won close to 30% of the electoral vote for seats in the *Reichstag*, Germany's parliament. On January 29, 1933, fearing continued social unrest and unable to see a better solution, President **Paul von Hindenburg**, the 85 year old hero of WWI, reluctantly appointed Hitler as chancellor.* Following the Reichstag fire on February 23, 1933, which Hitler used as a pretext to seize dictatorial power, he outlawed the German Communist Party (which he blamed for the fire) and all other political parties except his own. The proverbial die was cast; he was free to begin fashioning his brutally totalitarian regime that within six years would lead to the Holocaust and a second devastating world war.

* It should be noted that Hitler became the chancellor of Germany under process of law within a parliamentary democracy, *not* "illegally" as in a *coup d'état*. He, in effect, used the democratic process to destroy democracy.

In 1933, the first year of what was supposed to be a "*Thousand Year Reich*," Hitler justified to church leaders his planned anti-Semitic program on grounds that he would only be treating Jews as the Church had treated them for centuries, reminding them, for example, that the Church had regarded Jews as dangerous parasites and confined them in ghettos since the 13th century. Beginning with the boycott of Jewish businesses in April 1933, Hitler systematically, in ever escalating increments, implemented his racist policy. Throughout Germany, **Storm Troopers** and members of the **SS** posted signs that read "Don't Buy from Jews" and "The Jews Are Our

Misfortune,” smearing the word *Jude* (Jew) and painting the Star of David in yellow and black across thousands of doors and windows. These “bullyboys” stood menacingly in front of the offices of Jewish lawyers and doctors and at the entrances of Jewish-owned businesses. Passersby were “encouraged” not to enter as Jews were arrested, beaten, harassed and humiliated.

Nine years later, in 1942, SS leader **Heinrich Himmler** would declare that *extermination* of Jews was a “moral right,” an “historic task,” and “a page of glory in German history.” The SS was the chief instrument of Nazi terror and torch bearer of its racial ideals. Officially known as the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squad), it began in 1925 as Hitler’s personal bodyguard. Once Hitler appointed Himmler in 1929 to head the force, it assumed the role of Nazi Party police. Himmler developed the group into an elite brotherhood, complete with cult-like rituals and Teutonic symbols. Dabbling in *occultism*, Himmler believed himself to be the reincarnation of a medieval German king who had conquered eastern territories. The notorious **Gestapo**, in contrast to the SS, was the State secret police force, which specialized in extracting information out of people by gruesome torture methods at its Berlin headquarters on *Prinz Albrechtstrasse* (“Prince Albert Street”).

On the night of May 10, 1933, more than 20,000 books by Jewish and “Jewish inspired” authors were burned in the Opernplatz (Opera House Square) across from Humboldt University in Berlin. Not an isolated incident, in 30 other university towns, brown-shirted Nazi students along with many of their professors purged “un-German” writings from libraries and shops, setting them on fire. Enthusiastic crowds witnessed the conflagrations, launched with torchlight parades and accented by rousing speeches proclaiming the death of “Jewish intellectualism” and the purification of German culture. Works of **Albert Einstein** and **Sigmund Freud** were among those burned, along with books by poet **Heinrich Heine** who, prophetically, wrote in 1820: “*Where books are burned, in the end people will be burned.*”

During the first year and a half of Nazi rule, the regime focused primarily on establishing and consolidating its control over German society. In 1934 following President **Paul von Hindenburg**’s death, Hitler centralized political power by joining the offices of chancellor and president, then solidified his leadership by requiring all soldiers to swear a personal oath of loyalty to *him* as **Fuhrer**.^{*} Soon thereafter he attained one party, fascist, dictatorial control of Germany.

* A characteristic of most fascist regimes is the “cult of personality” which surrounds the leader who assumes quasi religious status among his followers. Italy’s **Benito Mussolini** as *Il Duce* fits that pattern.

In April 1933, along with the boycott of Jewish businesses, the Reichstag passed a law banning all “non-Aryan” medical doctors, pharmacists, dentists and dental technicians from practicing in German hospitals, clinics and public health centers. This was the first of more than 1400 national laws calculated to marginalize, segregate,

humiliate and impoverish Jews within German society. With passage of the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935,* which stripped Jews of their citizenship and human dignity, the racial core of Nazi ideology emerged with greater clarity. The main target of Nazi racial fanaticism was the relatively small Jewish population of Germany (approximately 525,000, less than one percent of the population), but as Germany began its quest for *Lebensraum* (“Living Space”) in earnest with the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, it would soon focus on all of European Jewry (8.86 million).**

*One of the saddest truths of European history is that many of the anti-Jewish laws passed by the Nazis and their collaborator regimes had direct antecedents in church laws and practices through the centuries. Historian **Raul Hilberg** has compiled an outline entitled, “*Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures*,” in which he identifies fifteen canonical laws that have direct parallels in Nazi law. One of them is the Fourth Lateran Council’s decree of 1213 requiring Jews to wear distinctive markings on their clothing (e.g. the Star of David). Another is the Synod of Breslau’s decree of 1267 mandating that Jews live in ghettos.

**3.3 million Jews lived in Poland alone.

In 1934, “Twenty-Five Points of the German Religion” by **Ernst Bergmann** was published in Germany. It asserted, among other things, that Christ was not a Jew but a Nordic warrior put to death by Jews whose death spared the world from Jewish domination and that Adolf Hitler was the new “messiah” sent to earth to save the world from Jews. On May 1, 1934, the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*, published by **Julius Streicher** – one of Germany’s most popular periodicals and Hitler’s favorite– reminded readers that the Jews were accused of committing ritual murder of Christian children, using their blood for religious rituals (blood libel). Also in 1934, Germany and Poland signed a ten-year *non-aggression* pact and Poland, Romania and the USSR pledged to respect their common borders.

As Nazi terror tactics ratcheted up in intensity, thousands of suspected political opponents were sent to concentration camps like the one established at Dachau on March 20, 1933, first of 50 camps to be opened in Germany that year. By July of 1933, more than 25,000 Socialists, Communists and Jews had been sent to concentration camps or prison. It is important to note that during the twelve year duration of the Greater Third Reich, approximately 2,600 Roman Catholic priests were confined in the “*Priester-Block*” (priests’ barracks) at Dachau. Additionally, at least 149 priests died at Auschwitz, including **Fr. Maximilian Kolbe** who was canonized a saint in 1981, and more than 2000 Polish clergy, including five bishops, died between 1939 to 1945 at the hands of the Nazis.

Religious affiliation in Nazi Germany in 1933 was 94% Christian – 40% Roman Catholic and 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. Forty three percent of the Greater Third Reich was Roman Catholic. Papal nuncios (ambassadors) were assigned 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 instruction was part of the state education system; chaplains provided spiritual guidance to military personnel; and theological faculties continued to function within state universities. The “Catholic Youth of Germany” by 1933 reached a membership of over 1,500,000 and embraced 33 subsidiary societies. 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** (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 servants, 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 negative messages -- in feature films, faked newsreels, phony documentaries, fabricated news stories, radio plays, even in children’s books – *demonizing*, *dehumanizing* and *scapegoating* Jews for just about every problem of German society. Public demonstrations were regularly choreographed and mass rallies staged to vilify them. All news was carefully controlled, censored and relentlessly upbeat. 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 *Volks-gemeinschaft*, or “people’s community.” Hitler, a charismatic leader and gifted orator, who purposely cloaked his rhetoric in *religiosity* was glorified with *semi-religious* fervor and revered as “savior” of the “Aryan nation.” Hitler, however, feared the power of the Church and worked to *neutralize* its influence... first in Germany and then in Occupied Europe.

The relentless propaganda barrage was accompanied by *state-imposed* terror designed to cower opponents and quash dissent. The Gestapo, headed by **Herman Goering**, intentionally made arrests at night using brutally repressive tactics to instill fear -- a policy entitled “Fog and Night.” Although there were German citizens who disapproved of Nazi excesses, few were willing to speak out, especially when it became clear that not only they, but their entire families would be severely punished. Opponents of the regime secretly disappeared without a trace and were not heard from again. Neighbor spied on neighbor. Children, indoctrinated from early age by ideologues of the Nazi Youth Movement, *informed* on their parents.* Opposition to the regime in short order became sporadic and isolated. Catholic clergy, members of religious orders and laity, even Jewish converts to Catholicism, despite guarantees to the contrary in the Reich

Concordat, were persecuted, as were their Protestant counterparts. Many were “deported” to concentration camps.

**Der Giftpilz* (“The Poisonous Mushroom”) was one of many anti-Semitic books written for German children. Highlighting the theme of Jews as Christ-killers, it urged children: “*Whenever you see a cross, then think of the horrible murder by the Jews on Golgotha.*”

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 small cash payments. For wartime civilians subjected to rationing, such a bounty provided a powerful incentive, one reinforced by widespread anti-Semitism, to cooperate with the Gestapo. Anyone discovered hiding Jews was *summarily* executed. At the height of the war, when living space, food, sanitation facilities, and medicine were in short supply, potential rescuers of Jews sacrificed a great deal to do so -- in addition to risking their lives.

Beginning in January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, Nazi racial policy, as noted *supra*, developed incrementally in stages:

1. In 1933... Jewish businesses were boycotted; Jews were banned from working in medical professions and in the arts and media.
2. 1933-35... was a period of “legal” discrimination against Jews in the civil service and professions, including law and education.
3. 1935-38... was a period characterized by passage of the Nuremberg Laws. Jews were stripped of the civil and citizenship rights, including the right to marry or have sexual relations with “Aryans.” Nazi policy focused on *Entjudung*, i.e. pressuring Jews to emigrate from Germany.
4. November, 1938...*Kristallnacht*, the first nation-wide, (including Occupied Austria, annexed to the Third Reich on March 12, 1938), coordinated and state-sponsored *pogrom* against Jews occurred, marking a new and sinister phase of Nazi racial policy and the beginning of the Holocaust.
5. In 1941... Jews in the East begin to be forced to live in inner-city ghettos, which would soon be “liquidated,” with inhabitants transported to death camps for mass extermination.
6. 1942 ushered in the last and most devastating phase of Nazi racial policy, the “Final Solution,” i.e. *industrialized* mass murder.

Perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders during the Holocaust were clearly influenced by anti-Semitism, a tragic outgrowth of Christian anti-Judaism. The image of “the Jews” as unrepentant God-killers who personified “evil,” who required the blood of Christian children for their rituals and conspired to dominate the world, created widespread fear and hatred of them throughout Europe. Nazi propaganda exploited Christian stereotypes of “the Jews” and portrayed killing them as an act of self-defense against Germany’s two mortal enemies – Judaism and Bolshevism.* That the killing was conducted under the “**fog of war**”** to rid the world of a demonic “*other*,” served only

to bolster the portrayal. Moreover, Nazi excesses were justified as being outside the pale of conventional morality. Hitler stressed this point when he said:

*“The Ten Commandments have lost their validity...Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing man from the restraint of an intelligence that has taken charge; from the dirty and degrading self-mortification of a chimera called **conscience** and **morality**, and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a few can bear...”* Emphasis mine.

*One of Hitler’s favorite rhetorical devices was railing against **“Judeo-Bolshevism.”**

The “fog of war” is a term used to describe the level of ambiguity in situational awareness experienced by participants in military operations, which, among other things, diminishes cultural taboos. The term is ascribed to the Prussian military analyst **Carl von Clausewitz, who wrote:

“The great uncertainty of all data in war is a peculiar difficulty, because all action must, to a certain extent, be planned in a mere twilight, which in addition not infrequently—like the effect of a fog or moonshine—gives to things exaggerated dimensions and unnatural appearance.

In addition to anti-Semitism, those responsible for the Holocaust were influenced by a variety of other factors, among them – nationalism/ patriotism, obedience to state authority, intolerance, peer pressure, fear, careerism, sadism, economic gain, lack of moral leadership from religious leaders, and failure of individual conscience.

Christians shared in the pride of German patriotism/nationalism and in their country’s long tradition of respect for state authority... reinforced by church teaching. They were pleased with Hitler’s military rearmament; his redrawing of Germany’s borders to include all areas with large ethnic German populations; his foreign policy successes (e.g. the “bloodless” annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia); his restoration of the economy; his road building projects etc. *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 excuse 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 regress more than 12 centuries.*”

*Obviously, not every Christian was blindly obedient to Nazism's morally indefensible policies. There were "*people of conscience*." Notably, Jehovah Witnesses, for example, refused to obey the regime and were targeted. One of them -- **Mary Smigiel**, a secretary in Poland, believing that only God deserved unquestioned obedience, 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. About 10,000 "Witnesses" went to Nazi prisons and camps, the largest single Christian group to offer organized and individual nonviolent resistance to the evils of Nazism. Most regarded the purple triangles on their camp uniforms as evidence of their loyalty to God's kingdom, instead of Hitler's.

In deciding how to respond to Nazi racist policies, regrettably, most German (and European) Christians placed duty to obey *state 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, however, ignored the distinction 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 theme of The Deputy, Rolf Hochhuth's controversial play about Pius XII, see *supra*.

*One of a number of Catholic priests who did provide moral leadership 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*.

There were, of course, lay Christians who resisted Nazism like **Franz Reiter** who wrote from his death cell: "*Being here, I could still change my mind, but with God this would be disloyalty*." A 36 year old Austrian Jehovah Witness, Reiter is an example of someone who took a principled stand of conscience, refusing to join the German army and support Nazi terrorism. He was executed by guillotine in January, 1940.

Clearly, not all Germans were Nazis, a significant number were people who abhorred the regime's excesses. But there were far too many *by-standers** who looked the other way or pretended not to know what was going on. Guilt certainly falls on the perpetrators and collaborators, but most ethicists agree that a measure of guilt also falls on the *bystanders*. Cain, in the Book of Genesis, asks the provocative question "...*am I my brother's keeper?*" (Gn. 4:9) God's resounding answer in the affirmative is both unequivocal and challenging. **Abraham Joshua Heschel** puts it this way: "*We must continue to remind ourselves that... all are involved in what some are doing. Some are guilty, all are responsible*."

*Letter of complaint from Mrs. **Eleonore Gusenbauer** of Ried, a village near **Mauthausen**, September, 1941:

“Inmates of the Mauthausen concentration camp are constantly being shot at the Vienna Ditch work site. Those who are badly struck still live for some time and lie next to the dead for hours and in some cases for half a day.

My property is situated on an elevation close to the Vienna Ditch and therefore one often becomes the unwilling witness of such misdeeds. I am sickly in any case and such sights make such demands on my nerves, that I will not be able to bear it much longer.

I request that it be arranged that such inhuman deeds will cease or else be conducted out of sight.”

Institutional churches, for the most part, with the notable exception of the **Jehovah Witnesses**, remained passive in the face of Nazi excesses during the Holocaust. Unlike in 1941 when private and public protest against the regime’s “euthanasia” policy for the mentally and physically disabled, * spearheaded by **Bishop Clemens von Galen**, succeeded in drastically reducing or, at least, forcing these killings to be done in secret, there was little public protest when Jews began to be “deported” to death camps and little official condemnation when news of atrocities in the East reached the outside world. (Von Galen was later sent to a concentration camp.) In order to protect their institutional interests and insure survival, churches, more or less, buckled under Nazi pressure, when their religious functions were restricted, their schools and presses closed down, and the courageous few of their members who protested were sent to concentration camps or prison. They, in effect, chose *accommodation* to the regime, rather than taking the moral high ground (admittedly a much more difficult course), of confronting it. The Vatican, as a sovereign city state, maintained its official wartime policy of “neutrality” despite the regime’s flagrant and repeated violations of the Reich Concordat,” including state recognition of Jewish converts to Catholicism. (See *supra*, for example, **Sr. Edith Stein**, martyr and saint.)

*“Operation T-4” was the Nazi euthanasia program started in October, 1939 to eliminate from the Third Reich -- *lebensunwertes leben* (“life unworthy of life.”), 70,000 to 80,000 people—including 4000-5000 Jews—were “euthanized.” Viewed as a precursor of the “Final Solution,” many of the medical personnel and killing techniques of T-4 were employed in the death camps.

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.” ... “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.”

There was considerable sympathy among Catholic and Protestant clergy for Hitler's conservative social values, especially his *crusade* against atheistic Bolshevism. Many clerics agreed with the twin Nazi goals to eradicate Bolshevism and to eliminate Jews from Europe. Some church leaders, moreover, were demonstrably anti-Semitic. A pastoral letter written in 1941 by **Konrad von Grober**, bishop of Freiburg, 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 protests of persecution referred to "non-Aryan victims,"* avoiding the mention of "Jews".

*Three million Polish Roman Catholics and 750,000 Orthodox Serb Catholics were murdered in the Holocaust.

Bishop Konrad von Preysing of Berlin was one of few church leaders in Germany to openly criticize the Nazi regime. As early as May 1933, Bishop Preysing publicly challenged the ideological tenets of Nazism. By January 1943 he was the only German prelate who consistently opposed the regime's anti-Jewish policy, even threatening to resign his church office if his fellow bishops continued their collaborative behavior, see *infra*.

Christians, by and large, agreed with Nazi goals. Many went along with the regime's racist policies, perhaps reluctantly, because they were otherwise drawn to National Socialism. They were inspired by *Der Fuhrer*, a charismatic leader and mesmerizing orator, who promised to restore order and achieve Germany's rightful destiny. They welcomed his goal of stamping out Judeo-Bolshevism* to counter liberal, democratic, anti-clerical, and "Godlessness" within the Weimar Republic. Following Germany's humiliating defeat in WWI, they welcomed his advocacy of a strong state, a strong leader, a new Reich that would once again rise to the status of a world power.

*Hitler, addressing the Reichstag on January 30 1939, said: "*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 understandably pleased with the improving social and economic conditions within Germany; they applauded Hitler's foreign policy and other successes* (e.g. rearming and expanding the military; reoccupying the Rhineland; annexing Alsace Lorraine; the bloodless annexation of Austria (*Anschluss*); the bloodless takeover of the Sudetenland, then the takeover of all of Czechoslovakia.) Moreover, as noted previously, Jews were *scapegoated* for Germany's defeat in WWI, the humiliating terms of the Versailles Treaty, and the ensuing economic and political instability of the Weimar Republic. Tragically, because of Europe's long history of anti-Judaism, Nazi anti-Semitism resonated with Christians, numbing their consciences** to Hitler's mistreatment of Jews.

*Hitler's foreign policy successes were due, in large measure, 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, i.e. 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.*" As British Prime Minister **Neville Chamberlain** attempted to appease Hitler's expansionist policy, he predicted "*peace in our time,*" Also adversely affected by the worldwide Great Depression, France and England sought to avoid a second war with Germany at all costs. Hitler capitalized on their reluctance to fight by engaging in ever more provocative actions until his invasion of Poland in September, 1939 finally went too far and war became inevitable.

** **Pope John Paul II**, in acknowledging the connection between anti-Judaism and the Holocaust, said: "*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.*" (Emphasis mine)

Revisionist historians claim that extreme racial hostility against Jews was exclusively neo-pagan in origin and limited to Nazi Germany. The facts, however, controvert this conclusion. The Holocaust, after all, took place in all of Western and Eastern Europe, not just in Germany. And without the willing participation, complicity and *indifference* of large numbers of non-German Christians, it could not have happened at all or 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, aware of Nazi racial policy, did little to try to ameliorate the worsening situation for Jews in Europe, including failing to offer safe haven within their borders to Jewish refugees, outside their established immigration quotas. With the exception of the Dominican Republic, countries closed their borders to Jewish refugees (see The **Evian Conference**, 1938).* Anti-Semitism was so pervasive 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). Moreover, later in the war, though requested to do so, the Allies did not attempt military measures, such as bombing rail lines to the death camps, which could have, at least, disrupted the *industrialized* killing process that began in 1942.

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

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

In 1938, four separate U.S. public opinion polls showed that up to 85% of the American public, still in the throes of the Great Depression and in an isolationist mood, opposed raising immigration quotas to allow entry of Jewish refugees. Anti-Semitism was so pervasive outside Europe 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). The German American Bund was an American Nazi organization established in the 1930s whose main goal was to promote a favorable view of Nazism in the United States.

Widespread anti-Semitism clearly affected American public opinion. Prominent Americans opinion makers like Fr. Charles Coughlin, Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh, for example, were unapologetic anti-Semites.

Fr. Charles Coughlin, a Roman Catholic priest, avowed Nazi sympathizer and rabid Jew-hater, was the most notorious. During the 1930s his popular radio program reached a mass audience, estimated at times to rise to as much as a third of the population, which even included listeners in Europe. His office received up to 80,000 letters per week. Historians consider Coughlin to be one of the major demagogues of the 20th century for being able to influence politics through broadcasting, without actually holding political office himself. Fond of quoting Joseph Goebbels, he once said during a broadcast: “*When we get through with the Jews in America, they'll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing.*”

After the 1936 presidential election, Coughlin increasingly expressed sympathy for the fascist policies of Hitler and Mussolini as an antidote to Bolshevism. On November 20, 1938, two weeks after *Kristallnacht*, Coughlin, referring to the millions of Christians killed by the Bolsheviks, said “*Jewish persecution only followed after Christians first were persecuted.*” On December 18, 1938 two thousand of Coughlin's followers marched in New York City protesting potential changes to the asylum law that would allow more Jews into the U.S., chanting, “*Send Jews back where they came from in leaky boats!*” and “*Wait until Hitler comes over here!*” Not until May, 1942, did his religious superior, Archbishop of Detroit, Most Rev. Edward Mooney, finally order him to stop his political activities, but not before Coughlin's rhetorical vitriol influenced many Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Critics of Pius XII charge that the Vatican wanted Coughlin silenced sooner, but feared doing so would cause schism within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church.

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, a more “traditional” anti-Semite of the time, serialized “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” a fraudulent text purporting to describe a Jewish conspiracy to achieve world domination. Although the Protocols had already been discredited as a forgery, Ford published over half a million copies between 1920 and 1922 in his own newspaper, “*The Dearborn Independent*,” and in a series of anti-Semitic articles entitled “*The International Jew: The World's*

Foremost Problem.” Ford accepted the Third Reich’s medal of the Grand Cross of the German Eagle in 1938.

Charles Lindbergh, the famed “Spirit of St. Louis” aviator, also received a medal from the German government which, when asked by American Jewish groups to return, he refused to do so. Lindbergh and his wife wrote laudatory books about Nazi Germany. As a member of the “America First” Committee, an isolationist group, Lindbergh sought to prevent U.S. entry into World War II on the side of England and against Germany. He reflected a “cultural” anti-Semitism and believed in quotas and restraints on what he saw as Jewish influence and power.

On May 13, 1939, the Nazis allowed 937 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. For thirty six days, the *St. Louis* sailed from port to port including to the United States, Mexico, and Jamaica, but the ship, in each instance, was refused entry into port. In mid-June, the *St. Louis* was forced to return to Europe, where the governments of Great Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium finally agreed to divide the passengers among them. Of the 908 *St. Louis* passengers who returned to Europe, 254 (nearly 28 percent) are known to have died in the Holocaust. 288 passengers found refuge in Britain. Of the 620 who returned to the continent, 366 (just over 59 percent) are known to have survived the war.

The various incremental steps taken by the Nazis against Jews *prior* to the Final Solution were all taken publicly and reported in the press. Foreign correspondents commented on all major anti-Jewish actions occurring in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia before the outbreak of World War II. The Vatican, moreover, because of its extensive diplomatic corps of papal nuncios and local bishops in every European country was also well informed.

Once WWII broke out with the invasion of Poland in September, 1939, obtaining information became more difficult, but reports, nonetheless, were widely published on what was happening. Although the Nazis, for obvious reasons, did not publicize the Final Solution per se, shortly after the systematic *industrialized* murder began in early 1942, details began to filter out to the West. The first report was smuggled out of Poland by the *Bund* (a Jewish socialist political organization) and reached England in the spring of 1942. Details reached the Allies both from Vatican sources and from informants in Switzerland and the Polish underground. **Jan Karski**, an emissary of the Polish underground, personally met with Franklin Roosevelt and British Foreign Minister **Anthony Eden**. In late November 1942, the U.S. Government shared reports with American Jewish leaders, which were then made public. While the details were neither complete nor entirely accurate, the Allies (and the Vatican) were aware of what happening in the death camps soon after it began.

The response to the Holocaust of the Allies, most churches and other worldwide organizations like the International Red Cross,* in the hindsight of history, was woefully inadequate. For instance, not until January 1944 was an agency created expressly for the purpose of saving Holocaust victims, the **War Refugee Board**. Before then little concrete action was undertaken. On December 17, 1942, however, the Allies issued a public condemnation of Nazi atrocities entitled “German Policy of Extermination of the Jewish Race,” declaring that Nazi perpetrators would be brought to justice after the war. This, sadly, was the only official condemnation made prior to 1944. It should also be noted that by December 1942, 3.8 million Jews had already died since the beginning of the Shoah—2.7 million died in 1942 alone!

* Despite its commitment to worldwide humanitarian initiatives, the Switzerland-based International Committee of the Red Cross made only sporadic efforts to aid European Jewry. Similar to the Vatican’s 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 non-Jewish civilian internees.

The Vatican declined to join in the Allies’ December, 1942 public condemnation of Nazi atrocities. When, U.S delegate to the Vatican, **Harold Tittman** asked then Secretary of State Cardinal **Luigi Maglione** if Pope Pius XII could issue a similar condemnation, Maglione replied, on the Pope’s behalf, that because condemnation of Nazi atrocities specifically would require the condemnation of Bolshevik atrocities as well, the Pope was “*unable to denounce publicly particular atrocities.*” The Pope, therefore, would only condemn atrocities *in general*. In other words, Pius, as head of the sovereign state of Vatican City would adhere to the Vatican’s wartime policy of “neutrality.” His critics contend that Pius acted more like a *politician* than a prophet, i.e. the “Vicar of Christ” on earth.

In the *later* stages of the war, Pius did appeal to representatives of several Latin American governments to accept “emergency passports” obtained by several thousand Jews. Through his efforts, thirteen Latin American countries decided to honor these documents, despite Nazi threats to deport passport holders. The Vatican also answered a plea to save 6,000 Jewish children in Bulgaria by helping them flee to Palestine. At the same time, however, Secretary of State Maglione wrote to the apostolic delegate in Washington, Bishop **A.G. Cicognani**, noting that the assistance should not be interpreted as Vatican support of Zionism.

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 2000, the Commission finished its review of Vatican archival material released to that date and submitted preliminary findings to the Commission’s President, Cardinal **Edward Cassidy**. Their report, entitled “The Vatican and the Holocaust,” indicated; inter alia, that several of the examined documents refuted the Vatican’s claim that it did everything possible to facilitate emigration of Jews out of Europe. Internal memoranda confirm, according to the report,

Vatican opposition to Jewish emigration to Palestine, i.e. “*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.*”^{*} It should be noted that the Vatican did not officially recognize the State of Israel, founded in 1948, until 1994, close to fifty years later. Ironically, the Vatican was first to recognize Nazi Germany in July 1933, within months of its founding. This occurred when Pius XII, then Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, negotiated the Reich Concordat with Franz Von Papen, which, Pius’ critics contend served to legitimize Hitler’s regime.

*One reason the Vatican opposed the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine was fear of reprisals by Arab Muslims against Catholics living in the Middle East.

Tens of thousands of Jews sought to enter the United States, but were barred by stringent American immigration policy. Even the relatively small quotas of visas which existed were often not filled, although the number of applicants was usually many times the number of available places. Practical measures which could have aided in the rescue of Jews included:

- Permission for *temporary* admission of refugees
- Relaxation of stringent entry requirements
- Frequent and unequivocal warnings to Germany and local populations all over Europe that those participating in the annihilation of Jews would be held strictly accountable
- Bombing the death camp at Auschwitz

Christians outside Germany, like those within, were generally *indifferent* toward Jewish mistreatment. They *too* had been conditioned by centuries of anti-Judaism which *numbed* their consciences to this particular form of injustice. Thus ethically *desensitized*, many of them supported Nazi anti-Jewish policies, some even willing to take part in the killing. After Hitler’s armed forces invaded their countries, for example, resident collaborators, *including* clerics in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Croatia, Poland and Hungary, were particularly helpful. Even in Vichy France in Western Europe, Nazi leaders were surprised by the eagerness some French citizens displayed in trying to please their occupiers. Clearly, not *all* Christians shared in responsibility for the Holocaust. There were, of course, those throughout Europe who, following the tenets of their faith, behaved *humanely* toward Jews, even to the point of risking their lives in rescue and resistance. Regrettably, however, their number was small in comparison to those who were responsible in varying degrees. Approximately 20,000 of them have been recognized for their 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 Nazi terrorism was not what brought about the *complicity* of ordinary Christians in the mass murder of Jews. Rather it was their long history of “*Jew hatred*” which led them willingly to assent to “*eliminationist anti-Semitism.*” Goldhagen contends that deep

traditions of anti-Jewish thought and action in the Church led it to a “*morally*” afflicted choice during WWII, 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.*”

1. Adolph Hitler – *Der Fuehrer*

Scope: Hitler's autobiography “**Mein Kampf**, first published in 1925, sets forth his *virulent* racist views *eight* years before he became chancellor of Germany. In it he calls for *elimination* of Jews from Germany to prevent the defilement of Aryan blood and corruption of European culture. Referring to Jews as *vermin, parasites, maggots, polluters and destroyers of Aryan humanity*, his virulent anti-Semitism was apparent for the world to see. The form of anti-Semitism Hitler embraced denied the humanity of Jews, not just to the point of viewing them as inhuman or subhuman, but “*anti-human.*” Jews were responsible for all that was evil in the world. They killed Christ in “Satan's service,” obstinately refused to convert to Christianity, and, contrary to church doctrine, their conversion to Christianity would not earn them a place in the **Greater** Third Reich, viewed as encompassing all of Europe. Every Jew was innately a criminal. Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister, in 1944 asserted, “*The annihilation of Jewry is no loss to humanity, but just as useful as capital punishment or protective custody against other criminals.*”

In pursuit of their goal of a racially pure Greater Third Reich, the Nazis and their leader abandoned the fundamental commandment of traditional morality, “***Thou shall not kill.***” Hitler stressed this point when he said:

*“The Ten Commandments have lost their validity...Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing man from the restraint of an intelligence that has taken charge; from the dirty and degrading self-mortification of a chimera called **conscience** and **morality**, and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a few can bear...”* Emphasis mine.

To characterize Mein Kampf as simply a racist work is to oversimplify its message. Germans did not follow Hitler because he was a racist; they followed him because he promised a better way of life and to achieve Germany's rightful destiny. In it Hitler reveals himself as, what one historian terms, the embodiment of three of the most destructive theories of the 20th century-- Social Darwinism, ultra-nationalism, and racism, most maliciously expressed in anti-Semitism based upon a bogus international Jewish conspiracy to rule the world. Though not the only purveyor of these ideologies, he holds the dubious distinction of being the only one to able to put these theories into practice on such a grandly *destructive*

scale. The cost, as history documents, was fifty-five, perhaps as high as sixty, million lives lost in WWII, including the genocide of six million Jews, in addition to unimaginable suffering.

a. Exploiter of Christianity and Anti-Judaism

Baptized a Roman Catholic, Hitler was a charismatic leader and consummate opportunist who exploited Christianity and anti-Judaism, just as he exploited the democratic processes of the Weimar Republic in order to destroy it. Although ostensibly pro-Church, he sought to neutralize the Church's influence and ultimately replace it with something of his own creation. He unapologetically cloaked his writings and rhetoric with *religiosity*, knowing this would resonate with the European populace. Early in his political career (in April 1922), for example, he proclaimed:

“My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded only by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who - God's truth! - was greatest, not as a sufferer, but as a fighter.”

“Today, after two thousand years, with deepest emotion I recognize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed his blood upon the Cross.”

“As a Christian I have no duty to allow myself to be cheated, but I have the duty to be a fighter for truth and justice. And if there is anything which could demonstrate that we are acting rightly, it is the distress that daily grows. For as a Christian I have also a duty to my own people. And when I look on my people I see them work and work and toil and labor, and at the end of the week they have only for their wages wretchedness and misery.”

“When I go out in the morning and see these men standing in their queues and look into their pinched faces, then I believe I would be no Christian, but a very devil, if I felt no pity for them, if I did not, as did our Lord two thousand years ago, turn against those by whom today this poor people are plundered and exploited.”

In addition to cynically exploiting Christianity, Hitler fully intended to eliminate “conventional” churches from the Greater Third Reich altogether, viewing them as threats to National Socialism and his own power. In their place there would be a “Nazified” Aryan Church, which espoused “positive Christianity.” Ironically, what church leaders feared would happen if the Bolsheviki prevailed in Europe, would probably have happened anyway if Hitler had prevailed.

b. Other examples of Hitler's exploitation of Christianity:

From Hitler's Mein Kampf...

"I believe today that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator." (p. 46)

"What we have to fight for. . . is the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may be enabled to fulfill the mission assigned to it by the Creator." (p. 125)

"This human world of ours would be inconceivable without the practical existence of a religious belief." (p. 152)

"And the founder of Christianity made no secret indeed of his estimation of the Jewish people. When He found it necessary, He drove those enemies of the human race out of the Temple of God." (p.174)

From Hitler's Speeches....

"The churches will be an integral part of German national life...The National Government will preserve and defend those basic principles on which our nation has been built up. It regards Christianity as the foundation of our national morality and the family as the basis of national life" (Reichstag speech, February 1933)

"The National Government regards the two Christian confessions as factors essential to the soul of the German people. It will respect the contracts they have made with the various regions. It declares its determination to leave their rights intact. In the schools, the government will protect the rightful influence of the Christian bodies. We hold the spiritual forces of Christianity to be indispensable elements in the moral uplift of most of the German people. We hope to develop friendly relations with the Holy See" (Reichstag speech, March 23, 1933)

"The Government of the Reich regards Christianity as the unshakable foundation of the morals and moral code of the nation... The rights of the churches will not be diminished." (The Speeches of Adolph Hitler, 1922-1939, Vol. 1, pg. 369-372 (London, Oxford University Press, 1942 – 1969 edition)

"National Socialism has always affirmed that it is determined to take the Christian Churches under the protection of the State. For their part the churches cannot for a second doubt that they need the protection of the State, and that only through the State can they be enabled to fulfill their religious mission. Indeed, the churches demand this protection from the State." (from first radio address to the German people in 1933)

“The Church's interests cannot fail to coincide with ours alike in our fight against the symptoms of degeneracy in the world of to-day, in our fight against the Bolshevist culture, against an atheistic movement, against criminality, and in our struggle for the consciousness of a community in our national life, for the conquest of hatred and disunion between the classes, for the conquest of civil war and unrest, of strife and discord. These are not anti-Christian, these are Christian principles.” (from a speech delivered at Koblenz, August 26, 1934)

“I believe today that I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator. By warding off the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord's work.” (Reichstag Speech, 1936)

“Providence has caused me to be Catholic, and I know therefore how to handle this Church.” (reported to have said in Berlin in 1936, regarding the alleged enmity of the Catholic Church to National Socialism.)

Impressed with the organization of the Papacy, Hitler is quoted as saying the following: *“I learned much from the Order of the Jesuits until now there has never been anything more grandiose on the earth than the hierarchical organization of the Catholic Church. I transferred much of this organization into my own party.”*Hermann Rauschning, Hitler Said To Me (1939), 266-267.

“I believe that it was God's will to send a youth from here into the Reich, to let him grow up, to raise him to be the leader of the nation so as to enable him to lead back his homeland into the Reich. In three days the Lord has smitten them And to me the grace was given on the day of the betrayal to be able to unite my homeland [Austria] with the Reich. I would now give thanks to Him who let me return to my homeland in order than I might now lead it into my German Reich. Tomorrow, may every German recognize the hour, and measure its import and bow in humility before the Almighty who in a few weeks has wrought a miracle upon us. (from a speech in Vienna after the Anschluss, April 9, 1938, and

In a conversation with Justice Minister, **Hans Frank**...

“...I have come to fulfill the curse imposed by the Jews themselves in the New Testament: ‘His (Jesus’) blood be upon us and upon our children.” 1938

2. The Reich Concordat -- “*foundation stone of the Shoah.*”

a. Prior to the signing of the Reich Concordat in July 1933, some church leaders in Germany opposed Nazism on the ground of its incompatibility with Christian morality. Several bishops expressed the view: *“As guardians of the true teaching of faith and morals, the bishops must warn against National Socialism, so long and so far as it proclaims cultural and political opinions that are incompatible with Catholic teaching.”* Some priests even refused to administer the sacraments to Nazi party members (a form of excommunication).

Major Christian resistance to Hitler and his National Socialist Worker's party had come from Roman Catholics, primarily through membership in the centrist Catholic Center Party,* founded in 1870 as a counterforce to anti-Church sentiment during **Bismarck's** *Second Reich*. Between 1930 and 1933 relatively few Catholics voted for Nazi party candidates. With the sole exception of the southern part of the state of Baden, Germany's Catholic population, particularly in rural areas, consistently withheld its support for Hitler and his party.

One unfortunate result of the Church's agreement in the Reich Concordat to confine its activities to religious matters and stay out of political matters, Catholic political activity in Nazi Germany essentially ended.* Hitler insisted, as a condition of the Concordat, that the Center Party be disbanded. The German Catholic Church, thereafter, withdrew its prohibition against Catholics joining the Nazi party and urged the German faithful to be loyal and *obedient* to the new regime, making it easier for Hitler to seize and maintain dictatorial power.

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

*The Vatican contends, however, that the Center Party ceased to be a political force in Germany before Hitler's ascension to power

Hitler, an astute politician, realized that official Vatican recognition of his regime would be politically advantageous at home and abroad. And it certainly was because with the signing of the *Reichskoncordat*, the Vatican became the *first* sovereign state to recognize the Third Reich. Historians, John Carroll among them, contend that its signing presented Hitler with a significant early success. For this and other reasons Carroll terms the Reich Concordat -- a "*foundation stone of the Shoah.*" He writes:

"Even an indirect endorsement meant everything to Hitler as he sought to establish his legitimacy at home and abroad. In these early months of 1933, Catholic leaders went from being Hitler's staunch opponents to his latest allies. This transformation was dramatically symbolized by the fact that in 1932, the Fulda Episcopal Conference, representing the Catholic hierarchy of Germany, banned membership in the Nazi Party" and forbade priests from offering communion to anyone wearing the swastika; then, on March 28, 1933, two weeks after Pacelli offered his overture to Hitler, the same Fulda conferees voted to lift the ban on Catholic membership in the Nazi Party. The bishops expressed, as they put it, 'a certain confidence in the new government, subject to reservations concerning some religious and moral lapses.' Swastika bearers would now be welcomed at the communion rail." (Carroll, Constantine's Sword, p. 498)

b. As noted *supra*, Hitler insisted on the “voluntary” disbandment of the Catholic Center Party as a prerequisite for signing the Reich Concordat. After its signing, Hitler remarked during a cabinet meeting that the Concordat created an atmosphere of confidence that would be “*especially significant in the struggle against international Jewry.*” John Cornwell interprets Hitler's statement as “*claiming that the Catholic Church had publicly given its ‘blessing,’ at home and abroad, to the policies of National Socialism, including its anti-Semitic stand.*” Cornwell writes:

“...*The fact that the party voluntarily disbanded itself, rather than go down fighting, had a profound psychological effect, depriving Germany of the last democratic focus of potential noncompliance and resistance: In the political vacuum created by its surrender, Catholics in the millions joined the Nazi Party, believing that it had the support of the Pope. The German bishops capitulated to Pacelli's policy of centralization, and German Catholic democrats found themselves politically leaderless.*”

On July 1, 1933, before the Concordat was signed, the regime announced: “*Reich Chancellor Hitler still belongs to the Catholic Church and has no intention of leaving it.*”

c. Sadly, anti-Judaism coupled with the Church's agreement to refrain from political activity in the Third Reich became excuses for Catholics to tolerate the regime's racist policies, despite what should have been the dictates of *conscience*. Accordingly, beginning in 1933, as mistreatment of Jews became more and more extreme, most church leaders chose to remain *silent* rather risk jeopardizing church prerogatives “guaranteed” by the Concordat. The Concordat, *inter alia*, affirmed the Church's legal status and granted it and its agencies protection in Germany, so long as the Church stayed out of politics. Despite the Concordat's “guarantee” of freedom from state interference in religious matters, however, that and other provisions were flagrantly and routinely violated. For example, Catholics were harassed and arrested on trumped-up charges; church schools and religious presses were shut down; church welfare programs restricted to the *racially* “fit;” and Catholics, clergy, religious and lay members, were sent to concentration camps. Pleas on behalf of Jewish converts to Catholicism were likewise ignored, e.g. *

***Edith Stein**, a 1922 Jewish convert to Catholicism in, 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, see *infra*.

d. Most historians agree that at the heart of the German Catholic Church's failure to oppose Nazi racist policies was the notion that it was compelled to act in its own *institutional* interests. One historian suggests that at the time there was little desire in Germany 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, regrettably, provided Catholic clergy and laity with an additional excuse for

passivity. 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.*” Goldhagen, *A Moral Awakening*, p.87.

e. Article 16 of the Concordat required that Catholic bishops swear an oath* to honor the Nazi government, to make their subordinates honor it, and to shun acts that would endanger it. It read, in pertinent part”

“Before bishops take possession of their dioceses they are to take an oath of fealty either to the Reich Representative of the State concerned, or to the President of the Reich, according to the following formula: ‘Before God and on the Holy Gospels I swear and promise as becomes a bishop, loyalty to the German Reich and to the [regional] State of . . . I swear and promise to honor the legally constituted Government and to cause the clergy of my diocese to honor it. In the performance of my spiritual office and in my solicitude for the welfare and the interests of the German Reich, I will endeavor to avoid all detrimental acts which might endanger it.’”

* Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to take the oath on the ground that only God deserved such loyalty.

3. Bolshevism

a. Bolshevism, as noted previously, was perceived to be one of two major threats in Germany, the other -- Judaism. On January 3, 1937 a pastoral letter from bishops, dated December 24, 1936, was read from pulpits throughout Germany. A “fateful hour” has arrived, the bishops warned...

“Russian Bolshevism has started its march toward Europe. The Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, has sighted the advance of Bolshevism from afar and his thoughts and aspirations aim at averting the horrible danger from our German people and the entire occident. The German bishops consider it their duty to support the head of the German Reich by all those means which the Church has at its disposal. Co-operation in repelling this threat is a religious task. We do not intend to intrude into the political realm or yet to call for a new war. But we must mobilize all the spiritual and moral forces of the Church in order ‘to strengthen confidence in the Fuehrer’.”

4. Nationalism/patriotism

a. Among the other major factors that *constrained* Catholics from opposing Hitler were nationalism/patriotism, anti-Judaism/anti-Semitism, duty to obey secular authority, fear of reprisals, *and* lack of moral guidance from their religious leaders, i.e. the “shepherds of the flock.” In September, 1939, following the invasion of Poland and

beginning of WWII, for example, German 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 placed next to altars and from church newspaper mastheads, some pastors protested, on the ground that the symbol was a “key element” in the religious life of their congregants.

c. In October 1943, when the “Final Solution” was fully operational, **Bishop Michael von Faulhaber** of Munich declared: *“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**, of Berlin, (elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pius XII after the war) *“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 (People, Fatherland and Germanic Cultural Identity) as a Christian duty.”* Zahn, German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars, p. 203.

5. Nazi Persecution of German Catholics

a. Clerics and non-clerics who opposed the Nazi regime were interned in concentration camps or prison, including **Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg**, see *infra*, **Fr. Alfred Delp** and **Fr. Karl Leisner**. Lichtenburg died on the way to Dachau, Leisner died at Dachau and Delp was hanged in Berlin. Many thousands of laypeople also paid with their lives for opposing the regime, including the mostly Catholic members of the Munich non-violent resistance group “**White Rose**,” like, brother and sister, **Hans** and **Sophie Scholl**.*

* Hans and Sophie Scholl were convicted of high treason in 1943 after they were caught distributing anti-war leaflets at the University of Munich. Both were executed by guillotine.

b. In 1941 the regime issued a decree dissolving all monasteries and abbeys in the German Reich, many of them to be occupied and secularized by the SS under Heinrich Himmler. However, in July, 1941 *Aktion Klostersturm* (Operation Monastery) was cancelled because Hitler feared that protests by German Catholics might “undermine” the war effort on the Eastern front.*

*This is additional evidence that fear of Catholic protest could indeed influence Hitler! (See also, the curtailment of the Nazi “T-4 euthanasia” program, *supra*.)

6. German Bishops

Catholic bishops in Nazi Germany differed in their responses to Hitler, WWII, and the Holocaust.

Michael von Faulhaber

a. Defending his *refusal* to condemn the April 1, 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses, **Bishop Michael von Faulhaber** of Munich, who was elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Pius XII after the war, 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.*”*

* Ironically, Faulhaber also said: “*History teaches us that God always punished the tormenters of...the Jews. No Roman Catholic approves of the persecutions of Jews in Germany.*”

In 1933, Bishop Faulhaber defended the Old Testament against Nazi assaults on Jewish Scripture, however, he declared that his concern was only with the “*Israel of biblical antiquity,*” not Jews alive in his own day. His secretary added that the Bishop “*had not taken a position with regard to the Jewish question of today.*” James Carroll, *Practicing Catholic*, p. 262

During a homily in 1937, Bishop 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)

Bishop Faulhaber ordained **Joseph Ratzinger** to the priesthood in 1951. Ratzinger, who in 2005 became **Pope Benedict XVI**, 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 fully identified.*” John 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...*” (Carroll, Practicing Catholic, p.263.)

Adolf Bertram and Konrad Grober

b. There was disagreement within the German Bishops’ Conference regarding how to respond to Nazi racist policy. Bishops were aware of the atrocities taking place almost as soon as they began, including the *industrialized* killing of the Final Solution after 1942. During and after the war, however, some bishops including **Cardinal Adolf Bertram** of Breslau,* and **Archbishop Konrad Grober** of Freiburg** denied knowing what was occurring in the death camps. To lend credence to his claimed ignorance, Cardinal Bertram cut off contact with members of the Jewish community in his diocese. The Church, in 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 regime opponents. “*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 (now part of Poland), 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)’*”

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

** Archbishop Grober was known as the “Brown Bishop” because of his enthusiastic support of the Nazis. In 1933, he became a “sponsoring member” of the SS. In 1943, Grober opined that bishops should remain loyal to the regime despite abuses of the Reich Concordat. After the war, however, he claimed to have been such an opponent of the Nazis that they had planned to crucify him on the door of Freiburg Cathedral.

Michael Buchberger and Antonius Hilfrich

c. Bishop **Michael Buchberger** of Regensburg claimed that Nazi racism directed at Jews was “*justified self-defense*” in the face of “*overly powerful Jewish capital.*” Bishop **Antonius Hilfrich** of Limburg opined that the true Christian religion “*made its way not from the Jews but in spite of them.*” Hilfrich also wrote in a 1939 pastoral letter: “*The Jewish people were guilty of the murder of God and have been under a curse since the day of the crucifixion.*”

Konrad von Preysing and Josef Frings

d. At least two bishops, however, 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, stating that every person has the 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, in protest, Bishop Preysing informed Pius XII of his inclination to resign as bishop. Gunter Lewy describes the Pope’s response: “*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)

e. In December 1941, the annual conference of German Catholic Bishops recommended the introduction of a special “war prayer” to be read at the beginning and end of all Masses. The prayer implored God to bless the German army with victory and to protect the lives and health of all soldiers. The bishops further instructed priests to preach at least once a month, mentioning German soldiers “on land, on sea and in the air.”

f. A joint pastoral letter from the Bishops of Cologne and Paderborn in March 1942 reaffirmed the natural rights of life, liberty and property, and decried the arbitrary detention and killing of innocents. It concluded, however, with this warning to the faithful:

“That which we bishops had to tell you today with grievously moved soul may not however serve anyone as an excuse to neglect his national duties. On the contrary! With the full authority of our holy office we urge you again today: In

this time of war fulfill your patriotic duties most conscientiously! Don't let anyone surpass you in willingness to make sacrifices and readiness to do your share! Be faithful to our people!"

g. In August 1943, members of the **Kreisau Circle**, a Berlin resistance group, drafted a letter regarding the deportations to death camps. Intended to be sent to Hitler under the signatures of 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. Unfortunately, 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.

7. German Priests

Catholic priests, like bishops and laity, differed in their responses to the Hitler, WWII, and the Holocaust.

a. As the state subsidized church operations in Nazi Germany, priests were not only clerics subject to their diocesan bishop, but also civil servants subject to regime regulation. Consequently when it was mandated in July 1933 that civil servants offer the "Heil Hitler" salute, priests were required to comply. There were various levels of acceptance and rejection of regime policies among priests in Nazi Germany. A few heroic priests challenged National Socialism and its anti-Semitic ideology and paid with their lives. For example:

Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg

Fr. Bernard Lichtenberg, a priest at the St. Hedwig Cathedral Church in Berlin, was among those who spoke out against the Nazi regime. He joined **Archbishop Clemens August Graf von Galen** of Munster in opposing the "T-4 "ethanasia" program and openly prayed for the welfare of German 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.

During the 12 year duration of the Third Reich, the *priester-block* (priests'

barracks) at Dachau listed 2,600 Roman Catholic priests. Of the 447 German clerics interned in Dachau, 411 were Catholic, 36 Protestant.

On the other hand, approximately 140 priests actively promoted National Socialism. They were known as “**brown priests**” (brown being the official color of the Nazi movement). Some of these priests joined the Nazi party and fully embraced Hitler’s policies. For example:

Fr. Richard Kleine

Fr. Richard Kleine was an enthusiastic supporter of Nazism 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. Catholic priests were among the chaplains assigned to minister to 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. During the 1920's and '30's, as noted *supra*, Bolshevism and Judaism* were perceived to be the two major threats to Germany and Europe. Accordingly, one of Hitler's first acts as chancellor was to outlaw rival political parties, beginning with the German Communist Party. His twin goals were to eradicate Bolshevism and "eliminate" Jewry, first from Germany and then from Europe. Both goals resonated with most Catholics. That Jews made up a large segment of the German Communist Party only fueled the flames of anti-Semitism.

* Hitler in his fiery speeches railed against "**Judeo-Bolshevism**"

d. After April, 1933, by law 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. Gunter Lewy 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.

* Bavaria is where Germany's largest concentration of Catholics resided.

8. German Laity

Catholic laity, like bishops and priests, differed in their responses to the Hitler, WWII, and the Holocaust.

a. Anti-Judaism, embedded in Catholic theology and practice for centuries, as noted previously, was a powerful motivator of anti-Jewish behavior in Germany and elsewhere. Since childhood, German Catholics had been taught that Jews were "*collectively responsible*" for killing Jesus. Nazi propaganda portrayed Jews as *sub-human* polluters of the Aryan race who threatened the fatherland and world. Anti-Judaism/ anti-Semitism was relentlessly exploited by Nazi propaganda, laced with fear and reinforced with excessive patriotism and blind obedience to authority among Germans this created a *lethal* mindset -- chillingly displayed in the statements of two notorious, albeit amoral, Nazi perpetrators, both of whom were baptized Catholics:

Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz: "*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 wrote about his religious upbringing and 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 mine)

*Jesus taught his disciples to *love* unconditionally!

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propaganda chief: *“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.”*

b. There were, of course, German Catholics who resisted Nazism and worked to rescue Jews, among them:

German “Righteous Gentiles”

Oskar Schindler, no doubt the best known German layperson involved in the rescue Jews, was a Nazi Party member and businessman who single-handedly saved approximately 1,200 Jewish workers employed at his factory in Krakow, Poland. Recognized as a “Righteous Gentile” by Yad Vashem, his story was immortalized in Steven Spielberg’s award winning film “**Schindler’s List.**”

Elizabeth Abegg, a Berlin school teacher dismissed by authorities for her anti-Nazi views, helped many of her former Jewish students and others find safe haven, also helping to raise money to fund refugee escapes to Switzerland.

German servicemen stationed in the occupied territories are also included on the list of “Righteous Gentiles:” **Sgt. Hugo Armann**, stationed in Baranowice, Poland; **Major Eberhard Helmich**, head of the agricultural station in Drohobycz, Poland; **Major Max Liedtke**, stationed in Przemsł, Poland; and **Sgt. Anton Schmid**, stationed in Vilnius, Lithuania, who was executed by the Nazis.

9. 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. Heinrich Himmler (a Catholic) was chief architect of the plan, which Hitler (a Catholic) termed: *“the final solution of the Jewish question.”*

* Genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group. **Raphael Lemkin**, a Polish-

Jewish legal scholar, coined the term in 1944. See also, the Armenian Genocide (1915-17), perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks, and the Ukrainian *Holdomor* (1932-1933), ordered by Josef Stalin.

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* exterminate European Jewry was made in early 1942 at a villa on Lake Wannsee outside Berlin. The Wannsee Conference was chaired by Reinhard Heydrich (a Catholic), acting under authority of *SS Reichsmarshall* Herman Göring (a Protestant) who in a letter dated July 31, 1941 instructed Heydrich to settle “...*the solution of the Jewish problem...*” A surviving copy of the minutes of the conference, recorded by Adolf Eichmann (a Protestant), was found in 1947 by the Allies, too late to serve as evidence during the first Nuremberg Trial.

III. The Holocaust outside Germany

“Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common man, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.” **Primo Levi**

“Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only insofar as we need them as slaves for our culture; otherwise it is no interest to me whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch interests me only insofar as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished...” **Heinrich Himmler**

“Dear merciful people, I beg you and warn you, do not give a piece of bread to a Jew...No trace of a Jew is to remain. We should erase them from the face of the earth. When the last Jew disappears from the face of the earth, we shall win the war.” From a Sunday homily of a priest in Kowel (Ukraine), May 1942

Scope: The Holocaust began in Germany in November, 1938 during *Kristallnacht* but spread like wildfire throughout Western and Eastern Europe. According to Hitler’s *weltanschauung* (“worldview”), hegemony over the entire European continent was Germany’s rightful destiny. To achieve this, he would have to gut the Versailles Treaty of 1919 and subvert the Weimar Republic that it created. And Hitler, cleverly, did just that --using the tools of democracy to defeat democracy.

His actions between 1933 and 1939 were directed at undoing the Treaty, including withdrawing from the League of Nations; undermining parliamentary democracy in Germany; re-arming militarily; consolidating power within a brutally totalitarian one party fascist dictatorship; and positioning Germany to launch its 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 to world war for the second time in 21 years. Hitler’s ultimate goal was to create an economically *independent* **Greater German Reich**, a racially “pure” Aryan society without Jews, based on the *slave* labor of racially “inferior” races like the Slavs,* with access to the abundant natural resources of occupied territories. His ultimate intent -- to achieve Germany’s “rightful” destiny by obliterating the world conspiracy of “Judeo-Bolshevism,” thereby rescuing Western civilization from the scourge of Communism and the “pernicious” influence of Jews.

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

Between the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the spring of 1940, no significant fighting took place in the West. In April 1940, Germany invaded Norway and Denmark. In May German army units attacked France, Belgium and Holland and rapidly rolled back the French army, thought to be secure behind the Maginot Line, and at **Dunkirk** drove the British back across the English Channel. The surprisingly easy victory over France marked the high water mark of Hitler’s popularity at home. In July 1940, Germany began planning the invasion of Britain (“**Operation Sea Lion**”) and launched an air assault (the “**Battle of Britain.**”) Britain proved to be a tougher foe than the French as the Royal Air Force defeated the German *Luftwaffe* in a series of air battles.

After completing their successful military campaign in the West, the Germans tightened their grip on European Jewry. In less than two years – from their invasion of Poland in September 1939 to the beginning of their campaign against the Soviet Union (“**Operation Barbarossa**”) in June 1941 – they managed to conquer most of Europe. Norway, Denmark, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Greece fell after only brief military operations. Southeastern Europe—Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria—were incorporated willingly into the Nazi sphere of influence.

The Germans employed different methods in dealing with the Jews of Western Europe, where anti-Semitism lacked the intensity of the East European variety. Much of the population of Western Europe viewed Jews as an integral part of their nations’ societies. As a result the Germans had to be more circumspect and considerate of local sensibilities there, where local governments were granted a measure of self rule, e.g. **Vichy France**. Ghettos (as opposed to “transit camps”) and death camps, for example, were not located in the West, but only in the East.

Hitler’s race policy was central to his goals of creating “*living space*” for the German Aryan nation and stamping out Judaism *and* Bolshevism. Accordingly, employing his skills as a charismatic leader, gifted orator and consummate opportunist, he capitalized on Europe’s two greatest fears. Expansion into the East, therefore, was to be not only a campaign to gain territory, but also a *crusade* against the two greatest threats to Europe and western civilization.

The actual killing of Jews by mass shootings, mobile killing vans, and Zyklon B gas took place in Eastern Europe. The killing installations were set up in the East for at least three reasons. First, there is where the largest concentrations of Jews lived. Second, as noted *supra*, the Nazis viewed the Slavic populations of Eastern Europe as *inferior* races, so they were less hesitant to carry out extreme brutality there. And third, they were less concerned about public opinion or offending local sensibilities in Eastern European countries. That the East was more removed from the eyes of the western allies was an additional plus. And most importantly, anti-Semitism was more intense and pervasive in the East.

In his campaign to “*eliminate*” European Jewry,* therefore, as his territorial control expanded into Western and Eastern Europe, where, as in Germany, anti-Semitism existed in varying intensities, Hitler found thousands of willing accomplices. These accomplices, sadly, included Catholic clergy and laity. Local police forces in France (the *gendarmerie*) and in the Netherlands, for example, participated in roundups of Jews. Hungarian army troops and fascist extremists (members of the Arrow Cross party) joined the hunt and helped slaughter thousands of victims. Slovakia's “Hlinka Guard,” modeled after Nazi Storm Troopers, ruthlessly hounded Jews while local police, as elsewhere, organized deportations. The “*Ustasa*,” the dominant nationalist faction in fascist Croatia, 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 *and* 3 million Polish Catholics. In Romania and the Crimea, the “enthusiasm” of volunteer ethnic German and Romanian army units taking part in mass shootings surprised even the SS. The city of Odessa in Transnistria (a Ukrainian territory acquired by Germany and Romania in 1941) was home to 180,000 Jews. In February 1942, it was proclaimed “*Judenfrei*” (“cleansed of Jews.”)

*Initially, Hitler’s Jewish policy consisted of forcibly “encouraging” Jews to emigrate from Germany. When it became clear that other countries were not interested in accepting them as refugees in sufficient numbers, however, “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 of them. 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**, a Roman Catholic priest and fascist leader of Slovakia; **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic**, a Roman Catholic priest and commandant of the **Jasenovac** death camp in Croatia, and **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac**, Vatican appointed prelate of Croatia,

all of whom were convicted of war crimes after the war (Tiso and Filipovic were executed), the Holocaust could not have succeeded on such a massive scale.

*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 intense in Eastern Europe, where most Jews resided. Church leaders outside Germany, by and large, were *passive* in their response to the killings with only a handful willing to provide moral leadership 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 *bystanders* in a particular country, meant greater likelihood of Jewish survival.

In those times there was darkness everywhere. In heaven and on earth, all the gates of compassion seemed to have been closed. The killer killed and the Jews died and the outside world adopted an attitude either of complicity or indifference. Only a few had the courage to care. These few men and women were vulnerable, afraid, helpless – what made them different from their fellow citizens? ... Why were there so few? ... Let us remember: What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander... Let us not forget after all, there is always a moment when **moral choice is made... And 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." Elie Wiesel*
Emphasis mine.

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

1. The Holocaust in Poland

“I have issued the command...that our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy...Accordingly, I have placed...orders to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space (Lebensraum) that we need.” **Adolph Hitler**

“I herewith instruct you to make all necessary preparations as regards the organizational, financial, and military matters with a total solution of the Jewish question within the area of German influence in Europe.” **Hermann Goring**, in a memo to Reinhard Heydrich, July 1941

“All Poles will disappear from the world. . . It is essential that the great German people should consider it as its major task to destroy all Poles.” **Heinrich Himmler**”

Background: As in other Eastern European countries, anti-Semitism in Poland was widespread and deeply embedded in society. In July 1934, the anti-Semitic organization *Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny* was banned by Polish dictator **Marshal Jozef Pilsudski**, three months after its founding. Following Pilsudski’s death on May 12, 1935, Jews in Poland experienced an uptick of anti-Semitism. On June 9, 1935, anti-Jewish riots broke out in the city of Grodno (now located in Belarus). Jewish-owned businesses and homes were set ablaze during a *pogrom* in the city of Minsk Mazowiecki in June 1936. The same year, riots erupted in Polish universities where Jewish students were restricted to special seating. Pogroms, rallies, boycotts of Jewish businesses and an anti-Semitic legislative agenda, modeled on Nazi Germany’s, in the mid 1930’s exacerbated Polish-Jewish relations. Germany’s growing economic and military strength convinced many Poles that the time was ripe to settle differences with their “troublesome” Jewish minority.

The right-wing, anti-Jewish weekly publication *Samoobrona Naradu* (“National Self-defense”) lobbied extensively to remove all Jews from Poland. Urging Poles to pay heed to their Jewish “problem,” the paper led a campaign to “clear Poland of its Jews.” “Jobs and bread for the Poles!” read one of its headlines as it attempted to arouse national pride, solidarity and unity. Jews were attacked throughout Poland between 1935 and the fall of 1939, tens of thousands of them fled to Holland, France, Belgium and Palestine. On March 31, 1938, just a few weeks after the *Anschluss* in Austria, the Polish parliament passed legislation making it possible to revoke the citizenship of Poles living lived abroad. Both before and after that date, the Polish government took steps aimed at preventing the return to Poland of thousands of Polish Jews living in Germany. In late October of 1938, the Nazis decided to deport Polish Jews to Poland, but Polish authorities refused them entry.*

*The family of **Herschel Grynszpan**, age 17, was among the Polish Jews who, because they were barred from returning to Poland, ended up in a concentration camp near the border town of Zbaszyn. Living

in Paris at the time, Herschel found out that his family had been forced to leave their home in Hannover, Germany. In angry reprisal, he went to the German Embassy in Paris on November 7, 1938 and shot a German diplomat **Ernst vom Rath**, who died two days later. Seizing the opportunity, Hitler used Grynspan's provocative act as the excuse to authorize the state sponsored program of *Kristallnacht* which occurred on November 9-10, 1938, beginning the Holocaust.

On September 1, 1939 when the Nazis invaded, Poland had the highest concentration of Jews in Europe, approximately 3.3 million, 10% of the population. Warsaw was one of Eastern Europe's centers of Jewish culture. Polish Jews, however, were the least assimilated of European Jewry because, among other things, of their distinctive dress, grooming styles, mannerisms and customs. They make up about 65 % of the Polish Communist Party membership. Jews had lived in Poland since the 11th century, when, ironically, they fled German to avoid persecution. While Poles struggled valiantly to counter the German invasion from the West, the Soviets invaded from the East, occupying the eastern part of the country under terms of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 1939. Germany already occupied the western two-thirds of Poland. On September 17, 1939, approximately 1.2 million Polish Jews came under Soviet rule.

By October 1939, Polish Jews *and* non-Jews were stripped of their citizenship rights. Young Polish men were forcibly conscripted into the German army. The Polish language was forbidden; only the German language allowed. All secondary schools and colleges were closed. The Polish press was shut down, libraries and bookshops were vandalized, Polish art and cultural treasures were destroyed, churches and synagogues burned. Priests were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Street signs were changed to new German names; cities and towns were renamed in German. Hitler's goal was to obliterate all traces of Polish history and culture. Polish community leaders, mayors, local officials, teachers, lawyers, judges, doctors, in short, most of Poland's intelligentsia, were executed.

The first mass execution of WWII took place on December 27, 1939 in Wawer, a town near Warsaw, when 107 Polish *non*-Jewish men were taken by force from their homes in the middle of the night and shot, beginning a series of street roundups and mass executions that continued until the war's end in 1945. The goal was to terrorize Poles into subservience to the Nazi.

The subsequent invasion of the USSR in June 1941 ("Operation Barbarossa") put the Nazis in control of Europe's largest Jewish communities, necessitating a new, more robust, policy to deal with situation. Hitler placed responsibility for finding a "solution to the Jewish question" in the hands of Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS and second most powerful man in Germany, who delegated the job to his chief deputy Reinhart Heydrich. On January 20, 1942, fifteen high-ranking Nazi party and German government leaders, including Adolph Eichmann, gathered for a meeting at a villa on Lake Wannsee outside Berlin. Heydrich presided, Eichmann acted as recording secretary. What resulted, as noted *supra*, was the Final Solution aka "Operation Reinhart."

Persecution of Jews, particularly in the urban areas, began almost immediately following the invasion of Poland. In the first year and a half, Jews were stripped of their property, herded into ghettos and ordered to perform forced labor in war-related industries. With the invasion of the USSR, the *Einsatzgruppen* mobile killing squads began to operate behind the front lines to shoot “dangerous elements” (i.e. Jews and communists). About 2 million Jews were shot and buried in mass graves,* many in areas of eastern Poland annexed by the Soviets.** Survivors were confined in ghettos throughout Poland, the seven largest of which had populations over 25,000.

* These mass killings have been termed –“**Holocaust by Bullets**”

****Tykochen**, a village in the Bialystok province in northeast Poland, was captured by the Nazis in June 1941. On August 25, Jews, who resided there since 1522, were ordered to assemble in the market square. 1,400 were transported to large pits near the city and murdered. A few survivors found temporary shelter in the Bialystok ghetto, but later perished. Today there are no Jews in Tykochen.

In October, 1940, the **Warsaw Ghetto**, largest in Nazi Occupied Europe, was established with a residency of 400,000 Jews. About 30 percent of Warsaw’s population was forced to live in about 2.4% percent of the city’s useable land space under *deplorable* conditions. Other major ghettos were established in Krakow, Lotz, Lvov, Lublin, Lida, Bedzin, Bialystok, Kovno/Kaunas, Grodno, Radom, and Riga. During 1942 and 1943 the Nazis “liquidated” the ghettos by deporting residents to six death camps built in Poland -- Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Jews deported from other European countries were also exterminated there, making Poland Hitler’s “biggest killing field.”

Over 90% of Poles were Roman Catholic, who, as members of the “inferior” Slavic race, were themselves brutally persecuted both by the Nazis *and* the Soviets* (although the Soviets too were Slavic). Most church leaders failed to protest the initial persecution of Jews and, later, failed to denounce the mass murders and death camps. Individual Catholics, however, including priests and members of religious orders, engaged in acts of “rescue and resistance.” Sadly, as in other Occupied European countries, Catholics were involved both as collaborators and bystanders. Almost 20 % of Polish priests died at the hands of the Nazis, including **St. Fr. Maximillian Kolbe** who died at Auschwitz, see *supra*.

* The Katyn Forest massacre, for example, was a mass murder of Poles carried out by the *Soviet* secret police in April-May 1940 under order of **Joseph Stalin** to execute all members of the Polish Officer Corps. The number of victims is estimated at about 22,000, murdered in the Katyn Forest, in the Kalinin and Kharkov prisons, and elsewhere in Poland. About 8,000 were officers taken prisoner during the Soviet

invasion of Poland, the rest were Polish doctors, professors, lawmakers, police officers, factory owners, lawyers, and priests.

At the “Operation Reinhard” death camps of Treblinka, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek and Sobibor --1.7 million Jews were murdered, the vast majority of whom were Polish. At Auschwitz-Birkenau alone 1.1 to 1.6 million Jews were murdered.

Joseph Mengele

a. On January 1, 1937, a 25 year old German doctor, **Joseph Mengele**, began his research assistantship at the University of Frankfurt’s prestigious Institute of Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene. Soon thereafter he joined the Nazi Party and SS, and six years later, in May of 1943, his career in service of Nazi Germany’s “racial purity” ideology reached its zenith when he was assigned to Auschwitz-Birkenau. During his 20 months there Mengele conducted medical experiments and presided at “selections” to determine who would be gassed. Self identified as Roman Catholic, his diabolical activity earned him the nickname “Angel of Death.”

Rudolf Hoess

b. In May 1940, **Rudolf Hoess** became commandant of Auschwitz. During his three years there, as Auschwitz was “upgraded” to extermination-camp status,* becoming the *largest* killing center, he directed the murders of more than a million people, and was responsible for the deaths of an additional half--million others through starvation and disease. Hoess performed his duties so efficiently that his superiors commended him as a “true pioneer in his field.” Yet, he insisted he “never personally hated the Jews.” He rationalized his behavior on the ground that Jews were “enemies of the German people,” and claimed his sense of duty compelled him to unquestioningly carry out Hitler’s orders. His devout Catholic parents wanted him to become a priest, but Hoess decided on a different career path, namely, to join the SS.

*The upgrade consisted of building Birkenau nearby in the spring of 1942.

Bishop August Hlond

c. **August Hlond**, bishop of Poznan and Gniezno and head of the Church in Poland, publicly advocated for discrimination against Polish Jews unless they converted to Catholicism. Thought to be less anti-Semitic than many Polish church leaders, Hlond’s 1936 pastoral letter criticizing Jews for their “harmful morality” revealed the growing influence of Nazi racist ideology in Poland. Church sanctioned anti-Jewish sentiment and activity undermined the tenuous position of Polish Jewry, exacerbating tensions between Jews and Catholics.

In a pastoral letter written in 1936 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.”

In 1936, Bishop Hlond said: *“There will be the Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain.”* (...which some understood to mean *“unless and until the Jews are eliminated.”*) Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope*, p. 280. Also in 1936 as pogroms broke out in Poland, Hlond condemned Jewish *“usury, fraud and white slavery.”* Historians contend that Hlond's anti-Semitic views provided religious *“cover”* for Polish anti-Semitic groups.

Pius XII fails to speak out

In January 1940, **Vatican Radio** broadcast reports of Bishop Hlond about Nazi atrocities against Jews *and* Catholics in Poland. These reports were included in documents submitted by the Polish government to Nuremberg Trial prosecutors after the war. Moreover, in August 1941 Bishop Hlond advised Vatican Secretary of State Maglione that Polish Catholics felt *abandoned* by the Church, citing the Pope's failure to speak out against Nazi persecution of Polish Catholics.* Pius, however, failed to speak out, at the time or later, in condemnation of the murder by the Nazis of approximately 2 million Polish Catholics (including 2,935 members of the clergy) and the murder by the Soviets of approximately 1 million more Polish Catholics.** Hlond was elevated to rank of Cardinal by Pius XII in 1946.

***Wladislaw Racziewicz**, a *priest* and president of the Polish government-in-exile, personally appealed to Pius XII in January 1943 to denounce publicly Nazi atrocities against Jews and Catholics in Poland. Pius did not.

**Pius defenders argue that since the Pope failed to speak out against atrocities against Catholics in Poland, it is unfair to criticize him for failing to speak out against Jewish atrocities.

Rescue and Resistance

d. As elsewhere in Europe, Poland had its share of local *collaborators*, *sympathizers*, and *bystanders*, but also its share *“people of conscience”* who resisted the Nazis and rescued Jews. The humanity of these good people is, indeed, remarkable

because, as noted previously, the Poles themselves were persecuted by the Nazis (and the penalty for helping Jews was summary execution). And, as if that were not bad enough, they were persecuted by the Soviets as well!

Only 10 % of Polish Jews survived the Holocaust, yet, Poland accounts for over 5,900 “Righteous Gentiles.” Poland ranks first among 40 countries, with almost one-third of the total. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, in Jerusalem honors the “Righteous among the Nations, -- men and women of *“compassion, courage and morality”* and who *“risked their lives to save the lives of Jews.”*”

Polish “Righteous Gentiles”

A Polish woman “of conscience” honored as a “Righteous Gentile” is **Irena Sendler** who smuggled hundreds of Jewish infants and children out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Eventually discovered, Gestapo thugs fractured both her legs and arms during a vicious beating. Sendler kept a record of the children she saved. After the war, in an effort to reunite children with their families, she tried to locate surviving parents, but most parents perished. Sendler then worked to have orphaned children placed for adoption with foster families. Asked why she did what she did, Sendler responded:

“My mother taught me that what matters is whether people are honest or dishonest, not what religion they belong to.”

Marie Szul, a member of the Zegota resistance group,* see *infra*, also recognized by Yad Vashem said;

“I was scared to death, like everyone else. But I made up my mind right then and there: If I can help, I will...my mother always taught me that God made everyone the same; He does not care if they are Jews or not, because everyone has the right to live”

* Zegota, a group of Catholic activists, was 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.

Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, a founder of Zegota, 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 from the gas chambers.

Anna Borkowska, a Polish nun in a Dominican convent outside Vilnius, Lithuania helped resistance fighters by hiding them in her convent, even smuggling weapons into the ghetto. Polish *nuns* were especially active in the rescue of Jewish children in Poland, sheltering them in their convents and schools.

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

Wladyslaw Kowalski, a retired colonel in the Polish army, used his freedom of movement to help some 50 Jews in the Warsaw region, moving them to places of refuge with friends, remaining with some of them in an underground shelter, until the Soviets arrived again, this time as liberators, in January, 1945.

Dr. Jan Zabinski, a zoologist and head of parks in Warsaw hid Jews in empty animal cages for various lengths of time.*

*described in The Zookeeper's Daughter by Lori Space Day

Archbishop Adam Szeptycki of Lvov, like other bishops in occupied countries of Europe, urged priests of his diocese to provide fake baptismal certificates for Jewish children in hiding.

Unfortunately, most Polish bishops remained *passive* during the Holocaust. For example, three councils of Polish bishops took place during the German occupation and none of them issued a statement even alluding to the mass murder taking place on Polish soil. Moreover, correspondence between Polish bishops and the Vatican contain little expression of concern over the plight of Jews.

Poland – Hitler's biggest "killing field"

e. Approximately three million Polish Jews were murdered in the six death camps on Polish soil. Some Jews perished from starvation and disease in overcrowded ghettos or were executed by bullets before reaching the death camps. The total number of Jews killed in Poland, however, was higher as many were deported to Polish extermination camps from elsewhere in Europe. In particular, Jews from France, Greece, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, which raised the total to over 4 million exterminated in Poland.

Once again, it is important to note that of the six million *Polish* citizens murdered during the Holocaust, 20% of its population-- three million were Jews and three million were Christians, the vast majority *Roman Catholic*.

2. The Holocaust in Croatia

Background: After Germany invaded, occupied and partitioned Yugoslavia* in April 1941, the Nazis permitted the local fascist organization, the *Ustasa*, to create the "Independent" State of Croatia. Croatia was the part of Yugoslavia with the largest proportion of Roman Catholics, compared to Orthodox Catholic Serbs and Muslims which dominated the rest of the divided country. Almost immediately

thereafter, the Ustasa regime under the leadership of dictator **Ante Pavelic** unleashed a brutal “reign of terror” in which hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Muslims were murdered. Serbs were considered the primary threat in Croatia. The regime established concentration/death camps, the largest of which was the *Jasenovac* complex, southeast of Zagreb. Others were located at Danica, Loborgrad, Jadovno, Gradiska and Djakovo. More than 80% of Yugoslavia’s Jews were murdered by the Nazis and the *Ustasa*. As happened elsewhere in the Occupied Eastern Europe, members of local militias and auxiliaries participated in the slaughter. Ironically, the Italian army helped save thousands of Croatian Jews, resisting the German plan to deport Jews from Italian held regions of Croatia.

*Yugoslavia, located in the Balkan Peninsula, was the political entity created at the end of WWI, a so-call “Versailles” state, which included Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia.

Clerics as Willing Accomplices

a. Incredibly, clerics of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia, from *priests* to a *cardinal*, were among the willing accomplices of mass murder there, not only of Jews, but also of Serbs (Orthodox Catholics), and Gypsies (Roma). Between 1941 to 1945, the Nazi puppet regime of Ante Pavelic* carried out some of the most horrific crimes of the Holocaust, killing over 800,000 people - 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.

* John Cornwell describes Pavelic’s “reign of terror:”

"(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 (the 1992-1995 Bosnian War) 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.)

Fr. Miroslav Filipovic executed for War Crimes

b. Many victims of the Pavelic regime were killed in *Jasenovac*, a death camp complex 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 *Jasenovac*, 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 murdered. Prisoners were often made to stand in trenches where each was killed with a sledgehammer blow.

c. When the *Ustasha* government was installed in May 1941, Cardinal Stepinac offered congratulations to Pavelic and hosted a banquet to celebrate the new regime. Following the inaugural session of the Ustasha parliament, Pavelic, a “devout” Roman Catholic, 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 Roman Catholic 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.”

*Pius was criticized for his reception of Pavelic. An unattributed British Foreign Office memo on the subject described Pius as “*the greatest moral coward of our age.*”

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

“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 well 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 Ustasha Army, which was responsible for killing those unwilling to convert. Stepinac, known as "Father Confessor" of the Ustashi, regularly bestowed his blessing on its members.

*John Cornwell charges that from the beginning of the Pavelic regime, the Vatican knew what was happening in Croatia. In May 1941, Cornwell avers, 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 the country of Yugoslavia. Cornwell further charges that from the start, Pavelic was known to be a "*totalitarian dictator*" and "*puppet of Hitler and Mussolini*;" who promulgated anti-Semitic legislation, and favored "*enforced conversions from Orthodox to Catholic Christianity*."

f. Pius XII never *publicly* condemned the execution of Jews, Serbs and Muslims or forced conversions of Serbs. The Vatican did, however, repudiate forced conversions in a written memorandum dated January 25, 1942, from Secretary of State Maglione to the Croatia legation. Pius XII was well-informed of the involvement of Catholic clergy, even having in his possession a list of clerics who had "joined in the slaughter," but decided against condemning the regime or taking action against the clergy involved, fearing that such action would lead to *schism* or undermine the formation of a future Croatian state.

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* escaped disguised as a Catholic priest.

* Pavelic chided Hitler on a visit to Berlin about his "lenient" treatment of German Jews, boasting that in comparison he (Pavelic) had completely solved the Jewish problem in Croatia, while some Jews remained alive in the Third Reich.

Cardinal Stepinac convicted of War Crimes

g. At the end of war, under the succeeding communist regime of **Josip Broz Tito**, Cardinal Stepinac was tried for "war crimes," i.e., collaboration with the Nazis, collaboration with the "genocidal" Pavelic regime, allowing chaplains in the Ustasa army to act as religious agitators, forceful conversions of Orthodox Catholic Serbs, and high treason against the Yugoslav government. After trial* in Zagreb, Stepinac was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison. Prosecution witnesses testified, among other things, that a group of *priests* armed with pistols sought to convert or kill 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 as political (“communist”) theater. Pius XII excommunicated all Catholics involved in the court proceedings, including jury members, and termed the process the “saddest trial” (“*tristissimo processo*”).

Michael Phayer, author of *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965*, writes that “*the charge that Stepinac supported the Pavelic regime was, of course, true, as everyone knew*”, and that “*if Stepinac had responded to the charges against him, his defense would have inevitably unraveled, exposing the Vatican's support of the genocidal Pavelic*. p.152.

Fr. Dragutin Jesih

There is, at least, one notable exception to clerics in Croatia who were complicit with the Pavelic regime. **Fr. Dragutin Jesih** sheltered Jews in his home and elsewhere, for which he was executed by the Ustasha militia. Fr. Jesih has been recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.”

3. The Holocaust in Slovakia

Background: Like Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia was a political entity created at the end of World War I -- a so-call “Versailles” state. It included the Czech provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Despite its multinational population and tense relations with neighboring countries, all of which coveted its territory, Czechoslovakia remained a functioning parliamentary democracy until 1938. On September 29, 1938, Hitler, Mussolini, **Neville Chamberlain** of Great Britain and **Edouard Daladier** of France signed the Munich Pact,* which permitted Nazi Germany to annex the German-speaking Sudetenland. Six months later, on March 15, 1939, Germany, in flagrant violation of the Munich Pact, invaded and occupied the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia. A *partitioned* Czechoslovakia was then swallowed up by the Greater Third Reich.

*The Munich Pact was an unsuccessful attempt by Chamberlain and Daladier to appease Hitler.

Slovakia became an “independent” state under the leadership of Roman Catholic *priest*, **Fr. Jozef Tiso**, whose followers established a fascist, authoritarian, one-party dictatorship, strongly influenced by the separatist national Catholic hierarchy and closely allied with Nazi Germany. The ruling party was the “Slovak People's Party.” Tiso’s Slovakia like Pavelic’s Croatia, in actuality, was a Nazi “puppet” state, which became an enthusiastic participant in the Holocaust. Jews were targeted as “enemies” of the Slovak people. Anti-Jewish

laws were passed patterned after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. As in other Occupied European countries, transport of Jews to death camps became government policy. The Slovak government agreed to pay 500 *Reichsmarks* for every deported Jew.

Tiso continued his anti-Jewish policy despite several protests from the Vatican. The Apostolic Delegate in Bratislava protested personally to Tiso, appealing to his “feelings as a priest of the Catholic faith.” That Slovakia’s government had a priest at its head and priests in political leadership, no doubt, legitimized anti-Jewish measures in the eyes of the Catholic faithful. Tiso, however, did attempt to protect Jewish converts, issuing approximately 1,100 exemptions from deportation, mainly to wealthy Jews.

In November 1940, Slovakia joined the Axis alliance when Tiso signed the Tripartite Pact. As required by the alliance, Slovakia participated in the invasion of the USSR in June 1941 and declared war on Britain and the United States in December 1941.

Fr. Josef Tiso Executed for War Crimes

a. For his involvement in the Holocaust, **Fr. Jozef Tiso**, the fascist dictator of Slovakia, was hanged as a war criminal after the war. Tiso had claimed that it was “*a Christian act to expel Jews so that Slovakia could free itself of ‘its pests.’*” **Monsignor Domenico Tardini**, an undersecretary in the Vatican’s Secretariat of State, aware of what was happening 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, it might not be able to avoid being *blamed* for it at the war’s end.

Catholic bishops in Slovakia issued a pastoral letter justifying the mistreatment 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.”

Vatican Response

Reports of the murder of Jews in Slovakia reached the Vatican by late 1941. In March 1942, Pope Pius XII was asked to intervene to stop deportations. He took no action. The Allies “begged” the Pope to make a statement condemning atrocities. The Vatican finally made a statement but limited itself to general, cautionary, language that decried the “horrors of the war.”

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

Fr. Tiso, a *notorious* perpetrator, was not excommunicated. Historian **John Morley**, author of *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1945* charges: “*Vatican diplomacy...was content to limit itself to the narrow confines of strictly Catholic interests, and an opportunity for a great moral and humanitarian gesture was lost.*”

Slovakia – first Axis member to consent to Deportations

b. Approximately 88,950 Jews resided in Slovakia before WWII. In March 1942, Fr. Tiso signed an agreement with Nazi Germany permitting deportation of Jews to death camps in Poland. Slovakia has the dubious distinction of being the *first* Axis partner to *consent* to deportation. Between March and October 1942, Slovak police, assisted by Slovak military personnel, units of the 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 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 thousands of people caught hiding or fighting with partisans. In all, more than 70,000 Jews were deported from Slovakia, only 14% survived.

Attempt to rehabilitate Tiso

c. Following the November 1989 “Velvet Revolution,” along with regained freedom for the Czech people came a negative trend in Slovak historic memory. Extreme Slovak nationalist elements appeared on the scene. The first plaque in memory of Tiso was unveiled on the wall of the Roman Catholic Teachers’ Institute in July, 1991, at Banovce nad Bebravou, initiating attempts in the press and in various publications to rehabilitate Tiso as a martyr.

4. The Holocaust in Lithuania

Background: The Holocaust in Occupied Lithuania resulted in the near total destruction of Lithuanian Jews living in the Nazi controlled territories. Out of approximately 210,000 Jews, an estimated 196,000 were murdered before the end of WWII. Only 6% survived the Holocaust.

The *USSR* invaded and annexed Lithuania in 1940. The German invasion of the *USSR* on June 22, 1941 came after a year of brutal Soviet occupation which culminated in mass relocations of Lithuanian nationals across the Baltics only a week before the German invasion. The Germans were welcomed as liberators and received support from Lithuania's irregular militia against retreating Soviet forces. Many Lithuanians believed Germany would allow the re-establishment of the country's independence. To curry favor from the Germans, some locals expressed significant anti-Semitic sentiments and joined in the killing of Jews.

The German killing squads, the *Einsatzgruppen*, followed the advance of the German army units and immediately began murdering entire Jewish communities. Most Lithuanian Jews perished during the first months of the occupation before the end of 1941. About 80,000 Jews were killed by October, and about 175,000 by the end of 1941. The majority of Jews in Lithuania were not required to live in ghettos nor sent to death camps which at the time were in the preliminary stages of operation. Instead they were shot in pits near their residences -- the most infamous instances of mass murder taking place in Ninth Fort near Kaunas and the Ponary Forest near Vilna.

a. Like Poland, Lithuania in 1939 had a predominately Roman Catholic population. A significant aspect of the Holocaust there was that the Nazi occupation regime fanned local anti-Semitism by blaming the Soviet annexation of Lithuania, a year earlier, on the Jews. Another significant aspect was the large extent to which the occupation regime's plan to murder Jews relied on local auxiliaries.*

*In June, 1941 a rogue unit of insurgents headed by **Algirdas Klimaitis** instigated anti-Jewish *pogroms* in Kaunas (Kovno) -- over a thousand Jews were killed in the first one. Nazi commanders filed reports noting that the "*zeal of the Lithuanian police battalions surpassed their own.*" The most notorious Lithuanian unit was a squad from the Vilnius area which killed tens of thousands of Jews, Poles and others.

Rescue and Resistance

b. As in other occupied countries of Eastern Europe, not all Lithuanians supported Nazi racist policy. Out of a population of approximately 3,000,000 (80% ethnic Lithuanians), only a few thousand were perpetrators, while many hundreds risked their lives to rescue Jews.

723 Lithuanians have been recognized as “Righteous Gentiles.” One of them is **Dr. Petras Baublys**, head of an orphanage in Kovno, who gave shelter to Jewish children in his orphanage until permanent places of refuge could be found for them. Another is **Ona Simaite**, a librarian in Vilna, who regularly traveled into the city’s Jewish section, supposedly in search of unreturned library books. In actuality she was taking food and other provisions to residents, as well as helping the resistance. Captured in 1944, she refused to surrender any information to her Nazi captors despite enduring torture.

In Eastern Poland and Western Russia, Soviet soldiers parachuting into the region commanded units of Jewish volunteers. A Lithuanian Jewish brigade operated in the dense forests near Vilna. In Belorussia, the **Bielski brothers*** led a Jewish combat group roaming the Naliboki Forest.

*The heroic exploits of the Bielski brothers is portrayed in director Daniel Craig’s film –“Defiance”

Sempo Sugihara

Sempo Sugihara, a Japanese national and the Japanese consul in Kovno, was a hero of the Holocaust who rescued several thousand Jews stranded in Lithuania after they fled Occupied Poland. Defying his government, he granted transit visas to Japan for at least 3500 Jews. The Japanese government cited Sugihara for insubordination and stripped him of his diplomatic post. He was also recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.”

5. The Holocaust in Hungary

Background: Historians refer to a “Golden Age” for Jews in Hungary from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of World War I. That was a time characterized by openness to Jewish emigration and assimilation, for which the Hungarian kingdom (of Austro-Hungary) enjoyed the support and loyalty of its Jewish population. The Hungarian Jewish community was the *largest* community of European Jews to be deported -- *late* in the war with lightning speed. Ironically, until the German occupation in March 1944, Hungary was a place of refuge for Jews.

The destruction of Hungarian Jewry, therefore, 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, 450,000 Hungarian Jews were exterminated in a “*killing frenzy that kept Auschwitz’s crematoria burning night and day.*” Hungary’s Jews, for the most part, had been spared persecution because, although Hungary was allied with Germany, its national government had 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

the Nazis. The “killing frenzy” began in mid-May 1944 and was over in July, just two months later. During that period, 70% of Hungarian Jewry was destroyed.

Hungarian Anti-Semitism

a. One reason mass killing occurred with little resistance in Hungary, as elsewhere in Occupied Eastern Europe, was its long history of anti-Semitism. Two thirds of Hungary’s population was Roman Catholic. In the first six weeks of German occupation, Hungarians made over 35,000 “denouncements” 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, “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 occupied European countries, justified their anti-Jewish hostility in terms of church sanctioned anti-Judaism. On the day deportations 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 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.”

Cardinal Justinian Seredi

b When Hungary’s fascist “Arrow Cross” regime began promulgating anti-Jewish laws in the 1930s, **Cardinal Justinian Seredi**, Vatican appointed primate, voiced no objection-- his only concern was for Jewish *converts to Catholicism*. **Michael Phayer**, author of The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, characterizes Seredi as “*callously anti-Semitic.*”

Archbishop Gyula Czapik

When Cardinal Seredi considered making a statement in protest of deportation, **Archbishop Gyula Czapik** of Eger advised against making a “strong” statement. Czapik counseled bishops to remain silent because Jews had “*sinned against Christianity while none of their community ever reprimanded them for this.*”

In Archbishop Czapik’s view, Hungarian Jews were receiving “appropriate” punishment for their past misdeeds and the Church ought not to endanger its good relations with the occupation government by speaking out on their behalf. A watered-down statement was written but *not* read from pulpits.

In late 1942, Pius XII advised Hungarian bishops that speaking out against massacres in the East would be “politically advantageous.”

In 1994 the bishops of Hungary issued a statement acknowledging that perpetrators were not the only ones responsible for the Holocaust. It read, in pertinent part, 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.*”

Rescue and Resistance

c. There were lay Catholics in Hungary like **Augusta Gervay**, who helped scores of Jews survive the Holocaust. Additionally, members of religious orders such as **Reverend Mother Margit Slachta** instructed the nuns of her order to shelter Jewish refugees; and **Brother Albert Pfleger**, a French-born monk of the Marist order, 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 Gyor, who pleaded with Cardinal Seredi to try to stop the deportations.

Raoul Wallenberg

Raoul Wallenberg was Swedish diplomat who made it his personal mission to help rescue Hungarian Jews by, among other things, providing more than 30,000 of them with Swedish passports. He also 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 death camps, but because of Wallenberg's extraordinary 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. For his heroic efforts, he was posthumously recognized as a “Righteous Gentile” by Yad Vashem.

Another “Righteous Gentile” from Hungary was **Imre Bathroy**, who when asked why she acted so heroically responded:

“...I know that when I stand before God on Judgment Day, I will not be asked what they asked Cain: ‘Where were you when your brother’s blood cried out to God.’”

In Budapest, Swiss ambassador **Carl Lutz** braved bureaucratic tangles and personal dangers to protect thousands of Jews. He too was recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.”

Sister Margit Slachta

Sister Margit Slachta, first woman elected to the Hungarian Parliament in 1920, headed the Benedictine Society of Sisters in Hungary. From the beginning she was an outspoken critic of Jewish persecution and was actively involved in rescue efforts. In the summer of 1941 when the Hungarian government deported some 10,000 Jews from its recently annexed territories in the Ukraine, Slachta protested vociferously. She said: *“We raise our voices in opposition to the fact that officially-sanctioned mass atrocities can take place in our country. We do this as members of the human race, as Christians and as Hungarian.”*

In her rescue efforts, she tried to enlist the help of clergy in and outside Hungary to work to stop the deportation of Slovak Jews which began in March 1942 and to stop expropriation of Jewish property in Hungary. She even met in a private audience with Pope Pius XII in March 1943, reporting to him in detail what was happening to Jews in Eastern Europe. Slachta instructed nuns of her order to shelter Jews in their convents -- one of whom was killed for doing so. Her order in Budapest supplied and distributed food, clothing and medicine to the Jews of Budapest during the last months of the war.

When Germans came to inspect a convalescent home for children attached to a convent, Slachta confronted them personally. She refused to let them speak to the

children about their family backgrounds. The Germans left and the hidden children were saved. In explaining her actions, she said:

“Do not let yourself be come preoccupied with evil...,but strive to achieve good. Have zeal for the good rather than fear for evil, have zeal for good deeds, rather than having fear and trembling brought on by sin.”

For her efforts, Sister Margit Slachta was recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.”

Msgr. Angelo Rotta

Msgr. Angelo Rotta, was papal nuncio in Budapest. During the deportation of Slovak Jews in 1942, he wrote to Pius XII, reminding him that the Slovak head of state, Josef Tiso, was a priest. He urged the Vatican to exert its influence on Tiso on behalf of Jews. Attached to his letter was an appeal from the Jewish Community of Bratislava. Mgr. Rotta became the Vatican’s source of information for events occurring in Slovakia, and later in Croatia.

During the final months of the war, as the German army was in retreat on all fronts and the reality of the Final Solution was already widely known, Msgr. Rotta joined a group of diplomats – among them were **Angel Sanz Briz** and **Giorgio Perlasca** of the Spanish embassy, and **Fredrich Bom** of the International Red Cross – who tried to help Jews in Budapest. Msgr. Rotta implored the Vatican to urge Hungarian bishops, who to that point had not publicly opposed deportations, to join in the rescue effort. Pius XII did write to his bishops in Hungary and also wrote to the Hungarian Regent asking that the government’s policy on deportation be reversed. The effort bore fruit as Hungarian bishops finally issued a public protest. And the deportations did, in fact, stop.

In October 1944, The Hungarian Nazi party, “Arrow Cross,” seized power in Budapest and the killing of Jews resumed...shooting them on the banks of the Danube River, after they had removed their shoes. Once again Msgr. Rotta joined in rescue efforts of by diplomats stationed in Hungary, who issued documents to Jews, making them protected citizens of their countries. Msgr. Rotta issued 13,000 documents and helped in finding safe houses to shelter Jews from shootings and death marches. For his efforts, Msgr. Rotta was recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.”

6. The Holocaust in France

Background: Before the onset of WWII, France, a predominately Roman Catholic country, was one of the more accommodating European countries* in welcoming Jewish refugees from Poland, Romania, and Germany. In June of 1940, there were approximately 350,000 French Jews, more than half of them refugees from Germany.

*The treatment of Jews in France at the hands of the Nazis is a poignant reminder of the fragility of democracy. Though French Jews

were emancipated and granted citizenship rights in 1790 (during the French Revolution) and were reasonably well integrated into French society on the eve of WWII, their fate changed radically in 1942.

A month after invading Denmark and Norway, on April 9, 1940, the *Wehrmacht* invaded France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Only the massive sea evacuation of some 338,000 British, French, and Belgian troops from Dunkirk in France at the end of May prevented the Germans from decisively destroying the military forces that opposed them in Western Europe. On June 5 the Germans launched their final assault against France. Paris fell with little resistance on June 14, 1940. Two days later **Marshal Phillippe Petain**, the aging French hero of WWI, took over as head of the French government who quickly petitioned for an armistice, which was signed on June 22.

The armistice resulted in a two-zone division of France and annexation by Germany of the eastern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine (taken from Germany under the Versailles treaty). The Nazis occupied the northern two-thirds of the country, including Paris. Southern France, with governmental headquarters in the resort town of Vichy, remained unoccupied until early 1942. The Germans allowed a *collaborationist* “puppet” government to exist there, led by Petain, in exchange for its “cooperation.”

The Catholic hierarchy in France welcomed the Vichy government not only because it seemed to represent a degree of independence from state interference, but also because it promised to repudiate certain *liberal* values against which the Church had long fought in France—divorce, for example, was abolished. Additionally, religious education was approved in state schools and some confiscated church property, i.e. the Grotto at Lourdes, was returned. As **Cardinal Pierre-Marie Gerlier** of Lyon said in an interview, “*No one supports more zealously than I the policies of Marshal Petain.*”

The “cooperation” demanded by the Nazis for allowing Petain’s Vichy regime to exist, included -- exploitation of French natural resources; approval of labor brigades to be sent to work in German industry; *and* anti-Jewish measures. The regime capitulated on all counts and, soon thereafter, proceeded to adopt various anti-Semitic policies, beginning with the establishment of “internment” camps for “foreign” Jews. Eventually, the Vichy regime also cooperated in the round up and transport of Jews to death camps in Poland.*

*Petain was convicted of war crimes after the war.

Preparations began in early 1942 to include Western European Jews in the Final Solution. Deportations from France started that summer with French police (the *Gendarmerie*) responsible for carrying out 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 their

transport to Auschwitz. Throughout France, Jews were herded 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 was the last stop before death for at least 62,000 Jews.

The last transport to Auschwitz left in August 1944. Over 77,000 Jews deported from France were murdered in Nazi death camps. Of these, one-third were French citizens, over 8,000 were children under the age of thirteen. 74% of French Jewry survived the Holocaust. The high survival rate was attributable to a number of factors, including the dispersal of Jews in many localities, minimal German police presence, the few church leaders who protested, Christians who engaged in rescue and resistance and the *relatively* small number of bystanders.

French Anti-Semitism

a. In 1941, the Vichy regime promulgated anti-Jewish legislation, the “*Statut des Juifs*,”* patterned after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. The legislation, among other things, excluded Jews from public life in France; required their dismissal from positions in the civil service, the military, commerce, and industry; and barred them from participation in professions like medicine, law, and education. Neither the Vatican nor the French Catholic Church issued any public protest. The silence continued after the occupation authorities required Jews living in the southern part of the country to wear the yellow star on their clothing.

* Prior to the passage of “*Statut des Juifs*,” Petain inquired of the Vatican whether there would be any objection to anti-Jewish laws then under consideration in the French parliament. Pius responded that the Church condemned racism, but did *not* repudiate every rule against Jews. When the legislation was introduced, the Vichy ambassador to the Vatican informed Petain that the Pope did not consider the legislation in conflict with Catholic teachings, as long as it was carried out with “*charity and justice*.”

Not all clerics in France were silent concerning “*Statut des Juifs*,” particularly after round-ups began. One notable exception was **Fr. Marie-Benoit**, recognized by Yad Vashem as a “Righteous Gentile,” see *infra*, who said:

”*The law (under which the Jews are being arrested) is immoral. Accordingly, we must not overlook such laws and are duty-bound to resist them actively...*”

In July 1941, consistent with the “*Statut des Juifs*,” the Vichy regime inaugurated a program of “Aryanization,” among other things, by confiscating Jewish-owned property. Thousands of Jews 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. *

*“Foreign” Jews fared particularly badly in France. Roundups of “undesirable refugees” netted some 30,000 Jews. Thrown into special camps, 3000 of them died because of deplorable conditions. At Gurs, 1167 died of starvation, dysentery and typhoid. At Rivesaltes, where children were imprisoned apart from their mothers, mortality rates were equally high. Horrible sanitary conditions; lack of food, water and adequate shelter from the cold; and sadistic harassment by guards were common features of French internment camps. In time, deportation to the East emptied the camps.

The French Church’s closeness to the Vichy regime and its long history of anti-Judaism /anti-Semitism (e.g. the Dreyfus Affair) constrained church leaders from protesting against anti-Jewish measures. One church leader who did eventually protest was **Bishop Delay** of Marseilles, but his remarks early on were “uncharitable:”

“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.”

Archbishop Jules-Gerard Saliege

b. There were some French bishops, particularly in unoccupied southern France, who publicly protested deportations. For example, **Archbishop Jules-Gerard Saliege** of Toulouse, in a pastoral letter read in the churches of his diocese said:

“That children, that women, fathers and mothers be treated like cattle, that members of a family be separated from one another and dispatched to an unknown destination, it has been reserved for our own times to see such a sad spectacle.the Jews are real men and women. Foreigners are real men and women. . . They are a part of the human species. They are our brothers like so many others.”

One effect of Archbishop Saliege’s pastoral letter was to open the door for other bishops to issue similar declarations condemning anti-Jewish measures. His opposition to the deportations and to the persecution of Jews helped bring about a change in public opinion. As a result, more Jews found hiding places within the French homes, demonstrating the positive impact that a “shepherd” could have on his flock.

Bishop Théas of Montauban wrote in a pastoral letter:

“I give voice to the outraged protest of Christian conscience, and I proclaim that all men, Aryans or non-Aryans, are brothers created by the same

God; that all men, whatever their race or religion, have the right to be respected by individuals and by states.”

Others who wrote pastoral letters urging tolerance for Jews included **Cardinal Gerlier** of Lyon, **Bishop Vanstenberghe** of Bayonne, **Archbishop Moussaron** of Albi and even **Bishop Delay** of Marseilles, quoted *supra*. There were more than 100 French bishops, at least six of whom spoke out in protest. The ones who spoke out set an example for how people “of conscience” ought to respond to injustice.

French Rescue and Resistance

c. There were Christians in France who engaged in rescue and resistance even before certain church leaders spoke out. Already in 1941, a group of mostly lay Catholics and Protestants formed an organization named *Amitié Chrétienne* (“Christian Friendship”), led by **Abbé Glasberg** and the Jesuit, **Fr. Pierre Chaillet**. Under the patronage of **Cardinal Gerlier**, primate of the Church in France, *Amitié Chrétienne* set up shelters that took in hundreds of Jewish inmates who had been released from internment camps. After mass arrests and deportations began in the summer of 1942, *Amitié Chrétienne* turned its rescue efforts into an “underground” operation.

There was also organized assistance provided to Jewish relief organizations in France. Archbishop Saliege, for example, opened all church buildings of his diocese to resistance activities of *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants*, a medico-socially oriented organization, making it possible for the French underground to create the first link in a chain of shelters for Jewish children. Of the 84,000 Jewish children who resided in France, over 72,000 were saved from deportation.

The underground French organization *Circuit Garel* rescued many children from Nazi transit camps and hid them in foster homes. The villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in Vichy provided safe haven for thousands of Jews until members of the Resistance could guide them into Switzerland.

Clearly, organized rescue and resistance efforts could not have yielded such results without the active participation of many individual Christians. Over two thousand French men and women have been designated “Righteous Gentiles” by Yad Vashem. Among them:

French “Righteous Gentiles”

Fr. Pierre Marie Benoit – A Capuchin monk of the Franciscan order, Fr. Benoit rescued Jews first within his native France and later in Rome. Following the Nazi occupation of Vichy France, Benoit prepared a rescue effort in concert with French and Italian resistance groups to save 30,000 Jews living in Nice. The plan was thwarted, however, by the Nazi occupation of northern Italy. Working with Jewish organizations

using a false name, he saved over 100 Jews by supplying them with counterfeit identity papers and persuading various foreign embassies to help in his endeavor. When asked why he and others risked their life to rescue Jews, Fr. Benoit replied:

“We did what we were supposed to...It was the most natural thing to help these people.”

Dr. Adelaide Hautval was arrested for illegally crossing the demarcation line dividing two segments of France. While in jail awaiting trial, she protested the inhuman treatment of fellow Jewish prisoners. Censured as a “friend of the Jews, she was sent to Auschwitz, where she refused to join a team of doctors performing pseudo-medical experiments on women. In 1964 Dr. Hautval testified at a trial in London, *Uris v. Dering*, that it was possible to disobey unjust Nazi orders even in Auschwitz.

André and Eliane Traband, a Catholic couple, hid a Jewish boy in their home for two years, encouraging him every night to recite the prayer, *Shema Yisrael*.

Fr. Raymond Vancourt sheltered a Jewish woman and her family wanted by the Gestapo, encouraging her father to don phylacteries and celebrate the Sabbath and holy days.

Sr. Anne-Marie Llobet, Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity and interim director of the Mixte Hospital, hid Jews in the hospital disguised as nurses and patients.

Pastor Andre Trocme and Daniel Trocme — Pastor Trocme was the religious leader of the Huguenot village of **Le Chambon-sur-Lignon**, France, which hid 5,000 Jews. Daniel Trocme, a teacher, was deported with his students and died in the death camp of Majdanek. Pastor Trocme said:

“We don’t know who’s Jewish. We recognize only people.”

Olga St.-Blankett Baumgarten, who in remarks after receiving the “Righteous Gentile” designation, said:

“...I thank Divine Providence for having allowed me to perform the commandment in Leviticus, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ an incomparably important commandment of the Chosen People.”

Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese national and Portuguese consul-general in Bordeaux, provided thousands of Jews with transit visas through Portugal, defying instructions from his superiors and in violation of Vichy regime policy.

“Culpable Silence”

d. In September 1997, French bishops issued a document entitled “*Declaration of Repentance*,” in which they acknowledged the Church’s “culpable silence” during the Holocaust. It read in pertinent part:

“Too many of the Church’s pastors committed an offense, by their silence, against the Church itself and its mission. Today we confess that such a silence was a sin. In so doing, we recognize that the Church of France (shares) with the Christian people the responsibility for failing to lend their aid, from the very first moments, when protest and protection were still possible as well as necessary.”

“...we must recognize that indifference won the day over indignation in the face of the persecution of the Jews and that, in particular, silence was the rule in face of the multifarious laws enacted by the Vichy government, whereas speaking out in favor of the victims was the exception.... The end result is that the attempt to exterminate the Jewish people, instead of being perceived as a central question in human and spiritual terms, remained a secondary consideration. In the face of so great and utter a tragedy, too many of the Church’s pastors committed an offense, by their silence, against the Church itself and its mission. Today we confess that such a silence was a sin.... We confess this sin. We beg God’s pardon, and we call upon the Jewish people to hear our words of repentance.”

Russian historian, **Leon Poliakov**, five years after WWII ended, charged that Pius XII had been a tacit supporter of Vichy France’s anti-Semitic laws and had been less “less forthright” than Pope Pius XI on the issue of Nazi anti-Semitism, either out of “Germanophilia” or hope that Hitler would defeat communist Russia.

Acknowledgement of State Complicity

e. 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, French 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."

7. The Holocaust in the Netherlands

"I looked out of the open window, over a large area of Amsterdam, over all the roofs and on to the horizon, which was such a pale blue that it was hard to see the dividing line. As long as this exists, I thought, and I may live to see it, this sunshine, these cloudless skies, while this lasts I cannot be unhappy." Anne Frank, written in her diary, February 1944

Background: In 1939 there were approximately 140,000 Jews living in the Netherlands (1.4% of the population), including 25,000 German-Jewish refugees who fled Germany in the 1930s. A poor and middle-class minority, Jews were seemingly well integrated into a Dutch society that exhibited little overt anti-Semitism. Roman Catholics made up 30% of the population. When Germany invaded and occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, Queen Wilhelmina fled to Britain to form a government in exile; Dutch bureaucracy continued to function under the occupying regime.

Anti-Jewish policy in the Netherlands evolved gradually, starting with a purge of Jews from civil service positions in September 1940, followed by the compulsory registration of Jewish-owned corporations and the registration by name of all Dutch Jews under race laws enacted by the occupation regime. Soon the policy took on an increasingly radical turn as Jews were forced to wear the Star of David and preparations began for their deportation to death camps.

By war's end, 107,000 Jews had been deported. Of these, only 5000 survived, another 30,000 managed to survive in hiding or by other means. Over 76% of Dutch Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis, including 14 year old **Anne Frank** and most of her family.*

** Otto Frank, the only survivor of the family, returned to Amsterdam after the war to find that Anne's diary had been saved, and his efforts led to its publication in 1947. It was translated from its original Dutch and first published in English in 1952 as The Diary of a Young Girl. It has since been translated into many languages. The diary, given to Anne on her 13th birthday, chronicles her life from June 12, 1942 until*

August 1, 1944. The house where hid at the *Prinsengracht* in Amsterdam is now a museum

Archbishop Johannes de Jong of Utrecht,

a. When the Nazi occupation regime ordered all people with at least one Jewish grandparent to register with authorities, the Archbishop of Utrecht, **Johannes de Jong**, did not protest, even though urged to do so by Protestant Reformed Church leaders who did protest. When the regime ordered that all government officials sign a statement declaring that they belonged to the Aryan race **Jan Koopmans**, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, wrote the archbishop asking him to speak out against the decree: “...difficult as this might be in view of the fact that the Pope had blessed Italian Arms and the attitude of some German bishops.” Archbishop de Jong did not to speak out.

Deportation of Jews from the Netherlands to death camps began in July 1942. Early on and in February 1943 Archbishop de Jong issued a public protest,* and ordered that a pastoral letter be read in all churches of his archdiocese in which he offered prayers for “*the people of Israel*” and their sufferings. Catholics were advised that cooperation with the deportations was morally unacceptable (an example of *passive resistance*). The Nazis retaliated by speeding up the deportation process, evening arresting Catholic converts from Judaism, including **Sr. Edith Stein**, see *supra*. She and other clerics were among those deported to Auschwitz.** .

* Other bishops also publicly protested the deportations, which undoubtedly encouraged some Dutch Catholics to engage in rescue and resistance.

**Pius XII defenders cite this instance of Nazi retaliation to support their claim that public protests by the Pope would have been counterproductive.

Dutch Rescue and Resistance

b. Approximately 24,000 Jews were saved by “people of conscience” in the Netherlands, 16,000 of whom survived. The Netherlands has the second largest number of Righteous Gentiles (after Poland) recognized by Yad Vashem -- 4,376.

Corrie ten Boom

For her efforts in hiding Jews from arrest and deportation, **Corrie ten Boom**, a member of Dutch Reformed Church, was recognized as a “Righteous Gentile.” In resisting the Nazis, ten Boom acted according to conscience and religious belief. Her defiance led to internment in a concentration camp, and loss of family members who died from maltreatment while in German custody. She and her family publically protested Nazi persecution of Jews as “injustice to humanity” and an “affront to God.” Two others from the Netherland recognized as “Righteous Gentiles” are:

Joop Westerweel, a Dutch educator and pacifist, created a clandestine network to rescue Jewish youth, members of a Zionist pioneering group. He would then accompany them through Occupied Belgium and France to the Spanish border. He was eventually apprehended and executed.

Johannes Bogard, a religiously devout Dutch farmer with little formal education, helped scores of Jews avoid detection on his farm and in nearby residences.

Much of Dutch resistance to the Nazis can be characterized as either passive resistance or non-violent active resistance. For example, immediately following the Nazi occupation, American and British films were banned from theaters, replaced with German movies and newsreels. Dutch patrons walked out or booed during the newsreels. Radio broadcasts under Nazi control consisted mainly of propaganda. Although forbidden to listen to BBC radio and radio broadcasts from the Dutch government in exile, many listened in defiance. In 1943, over one million radios were confiscated. When university students were required to sign an oath of loyalty to the regime, over eighty-five percent of students refused to comply. Underground newspapers flourished and were particularly useful after the confiscation of radios and loss of electricity during the later years of the war.

Resistance groups were organized to serve a variety of functions including rescue and shelter of Jews and other victims, creating false documents, providing couriers to act as messengers or engaging in acts of sabotage. It is estimated that over fifty to sixty thousand individuals were directly involved in resistance activities with hundreds of thousands more offering assistance. More than ten thousand lost their lives as a result of resistance efforts.

Acknowledgement of Church Complicity

c. In a 1995 statement, Dutch bishops acknowledged the role anti-Judaism played in the Holocaust by “*a tradition of theological and ecclesiastical anti-Judaism*” and “*the ‘catechesis of vilification’ (which) taught that Jewry after Christ’s death was rejected as a people,*” and they “*reject this tradition of ecclesiastical anti-Judaism and deeply regret its horrible results.*”

8. The Holocaust in Italy

Background: In June 1940, when Germany invaded France, Italy, under Benito Mussolini, entered WWII. In September of that year, Italy, Germany and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact which became known as the Axis alliance. Italy was the first Axis partner to surrender to the Allies on September 8, 1943, six weeks after Mussolini was deposed by leaders of his own party.

Italy's record regarding the Holocaust, though certainly not unblemished, is more positive than other European countries. Italian Catholics, for the most part, did not share the racist zeal of the Nazis. Before 1938, Italy's fascist government had not joined Germany, its future Axis ally, in discriminating against Jews. Jews made up about 0.1% of the population and, as in Germany, France and elsewhere in Western Europe, were well assimilated into Italian society. Most Italians considered Jews to be friends and neighbors (*paesani*). Jews even joined the Italian Fascist Party out of patriotism.

The Lateran Treaty

a. On June 7, 1929, Italy's dictator Benito Mussolini and the Vatican signed the Lateran Concordat (aka Lateran Treaty),* which finally settled issues left unresolved since Italy's unification in 1870 at the conclusion of the *Risorgimento*. The Concordat, among other things, established the territorial boundaries of Vatican City within the City of Rome; recognized the full sovereignty of the Holy See over Vatican City; defined church-state relations in Italy; settled financial claims over the loss of the Papal States during the pontificate of Pope Pius IX; and declared Roman Catholicism to be Italy's state religion.

*The Reich Concordat was patterned after the Lateran Treaty

A few days after the Lateran Treaty was concluded, Hitler warmly welcomed the signing, saying:

“The fact that the Curia is now making its peace with Fascism shows that the Vatican trusts the new political realities far more than did the former liberal democracy with which it could not come to terms... The fact that the (Catholic) Church has come to an agreement with Fascist Italy proves beyond doubt that the Fascist world of ideas is closer to Christianity than those of Jewish liberalism or even atheistic Marxism, to which the so-called Catholic Center Party sees itself so closely bound, to the detriment of Christianity today and our German people.”

Mussolini Falls In Line With Hitler

b. In 1938, the situation for Jews in Italy deteriorated when Mussolini, at Hitler's urging, initiated an anti-Semitic campaign which included *race laws* patterned after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. The *Manifesto of Italian Racism** declared Italians to be part of the “pure race” along with Aryans. Jews, inter alia, were forbidden to marry Catholics (*miscegenation*);** were barred from attending or teaching in public schools; were prohibited from serving in the military or holding public service positions; 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 resembled *Japanese-American* style 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 daily newspaper, published a bishop’s homily in he which asserted:

*“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. Emphasis mine.*

**Italy's anti-Jewish laws prohibited marriages between Jews and non-Jews, including Catholics. The Vatican viewed this as a violation of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which gave the Church sole right to regulate marriages involving Catholics, including converts to Catholicism. Article 34 of the Concordat also specified that marriages performed by the Catholic Church would always be considered valid by civil authorities. The Vatican understood this to include matrimony between non-Aryan Catholics or between one Aryan and a non-Aryan. The Vatican protested this provision of “Manifesto of Italian Racism,” but not other provisions which did not impact the Church’s *institutional* interests.

Italian Anti-Judaism

Italy, for many centuries the seat of Roman Catholicism and Western Christendom, like other countries in Europe, had a long history of anti-Judaism. In 1939, for example, **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.”*

Some Italian bishops refused to assist Jews in their dioceses, including **Cardinal Adeodato Piazza**, patriarch of Venice; the bishop of Modena, who insisted that dozens of orphaned Jewish children be removed from their hiding places in a diocesan seminary; and the bishop of Mantua, a known fascist sympathizer. Other bishops actually tried to obstruct the rescue of Jews, although the parish priest of a village in Valle d’Aosta, for example, defied his bishop by hiding two Jewish families of his parish.

Hitler 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 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, a most unfortunate occurrence, since most Jews lived in the northern and central regions of Italy. 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 Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In total about 7,500 Jews were deported to Nazi death camps during the Nazi occupation. About 20% of Jews in Italy perished. The remaining 40,000 Jews survived because there were relatively few *bystanders*. Ordinary Italians, including lower-level government officials, members of military, clergy and religious orders *passively resisted*. In many instances, Italians rescued Jews by obstructing deportation efforts, hiding Jews or helping them escape to unoccupied southern Italy. 80% of Italian Jews *survived* the Holocaust.

Rescue and Resistance

d. Notwithstanding the passage of "Manifesto of Italian Racism," thousands of European Jews, believing it more likely that they would be protected than persecuted, sought refuge in Italy and Italian-occupied territories. There was less overt anti-Semitism in Italy than in other European countries, despite the Vatican's location in Rome. In general, most Italians *ignored* Mussolini's anti-Jewish policies, although intellectuals and church leaders, for the most part, failed protest against them. Italy, like other countries in Occupied Europe had an active resistance movement.*

* **Rita Rosani** was a member of the Italian Resistance and the only Italian female resister known to have been killed in combat. She was a schoolteacher at the local Jewish school until 1943 when she joined the Resistance. She died on September 17, 1944, after fighting in several actions in the Verona region.

There were bishops in Italy who attempted to protect Jews. When approached by Jewish assistance organizations to help coordinate rescue efforts, for example, Cardinals **Pietro Boetto** of Genoa, **Ildefonso Schuster** of Milan, **Maurilio Fossati** of Turin, and **Elia Dalla Costa** of Florence instructed their clergy and religious to cooperate.

In Florence, **Cardinal Dalla Costa** mobilized his archdiocese for Jewish rescue, i.e. at least twenty-one monasteries, convents and parish churches were involved in rescue operations. **Monsignor Giuseppe Nicolini** of Assisi was a unique case in that he established a rescue program without even being approached for help.

Historian Susan Zuccotti credits **Bishop Antonio Santin** of Trieste and Capodistria for having demonstrated “*courage, initiative, and undeniable sympathy for Jews.*” Zuccotti cites an incident when Bishop Santin delivered a passionate homily in the presence of German and Italian fascist authorities, castigating them for the suffering they were causing to the “... *people from whose womb (Christ) came as a man and in whose midst he lived and died.*”

Yad Vashem has honored 281 Italians as “Righteous Gentiles” for their role in saving Jewish lives, including **Don Arrigo Beccari**, a teacher at the Catholic seminary in the village of Nonantola, who helped 120 Jews escape to Switzerland; Cardinal Boetto’s secretary, **Don Francesco Repetto**; **Frs. Rufino Nicacci** and **Aldo Brunacci** of Assisi, who, together with **Monsignor Giuseppe Nicolini**, arranged for hundreds of Jews to be provided with false credentials, to be hidden in private homes and smuggled out of Italy; **Fr. Giovanni Simone** and **Frs. Angelo Della Torre** who cooperated in saving twelve Jewish women and their children. And **Bishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli**, (the future **Pope John XIII**) see *supra*.

Another Italian honored as a “Righteous Gentile” is **Dr. Giovanni Passante** who when inviting a Jewish family to hide in his family’s home said:

“I ask you to stay with us for my sake, not yours. If you leave, I will forever be ashamed to be numbered among the human race.”

Monsignor Angelo Roncalli

Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece, papal nuncio to Bulgaria and France, the future **Pope John XXII** is credited with using his office to help rescue thousands of Jews. His nomination as “Righteous Gentile” is still pending. **Rabbi Simon Moguevsky**, chief rabbi of Buenos Aires, called Roncalli “*a man truly created in the image of God.*”

Among Monsignor Roncalli’s documented rescue efforts are:

- Assisting Jews who arrived in Istanbul to go on to Palestine or other destinations.
- Assisting Jewish children leave Slovakia.
- Assisting Jewish refugees whose names were included on a list submitted by Rabbi Markus of Istanbul.
- Assisting in the liberation of Jews held at Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia.
- Assisting Jews leave Bulgaria.
- Assisting Romanian Jews from Transnistria leave Romania.
- Assisting Italian Jews.
- Assisting orphaned Romanian children board a refugee ship bound for Istanbul, which went on to Palestine.
- Assisting Jews at the Sered concentration camp in Slovakia from being deported to death camps.

- Assisting Hungarian Jews by submitting baptismal certificates to Hungarian Nuncio, Monsignor Angelo Rota.

Vatican Controversy

f. The Vatican, as previously noted, has a controversial history regarding the Holocaust. Whether Pius XII, the world's most influential religious leader, did enough in response to the Holocaust is still subject to debate -- over seventy years later, see *supra*. 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 WWII, the Vatican appeared to respond more or less appropriately to the threat of Nazism. In 1938, for example, **Pius XI** spoke out against Hitler's racial policies and against Mussolini's willingness to follow Hitler's lead. Pius XI publicly asserted that it was not possible to be both Catholic and a Nazi. While greeting a group of Belgian pilgrims in Rome, he exclaimed: "*Anti-Semitism is inadmissible. We are all spiritually Semites.*" Pius XI died in 1939, six months before the beginning of WWII. Eugenio Pacelli, his secretary of state, succeeded him as Pius XII.

His critics contrast Pius XII's alleged "inaction" regarding *Nazism* with his forthright condemnation of *Communism*, including his excommunication in 1949, "at a stroke," of all Communist Party members *everywhere* in the world. Critics, moreover, point out, as noted previously, that Pius failed to excommunicate Hitler, or any other Catholic Nazi or Nazi collaborator, even those (some of whom were clerics) who were later convicted of war crimes.*

***Fr. Jozef Tiso**, fascist leader of Slovakia; **Fr. Miroslav Filipovic**, commandant of the Jasenovac death camp in Croatia, and **Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac**, Vatican appointed prelate of Croatia, all of whom were convicted of war crimes after the war. Tiso and Filipovic were executed, see *supra*.

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 Pius, a "saintly" man, who, they claim, did his best under extremely difficult circumstances by working "*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 both for general resistance in Italy and elsewhere in Occupied Europe to Nazi persecution of Jews, as well as *heroic* actions by clerics who participated in rescue and resistance. It is true that the Vatican sheltered about 470 Jews behind its walls following German occupation of Rome in 1943, while another 4200 were protected in Roman monasteries and convents, including Castel Gondolfo, the papal

summer residence. And, it is also true that, after the war, Rome's Chief Rabbi as well as various members of Italy's Jewish community praised Pius XII for his 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**, as noted *supra*, even suggests that Pope Pius XII should be honored as a "Righteous Gentile" by Yad Vashem," for Pius' role in saving "*more Jews than Oskar Schindler*" and because of the praise of Jewish leaders who cited his rescue efforts after the war. Pius's admirers, according to Dalin, 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**.*

*Historian Susan Zuccotti argues, on the other hand, that the Jewish politicians who praised Pius had an ulterior motive, namely, as "*Jews dedicated to the creation of the state of Israel*," they were attempting to urge Vatican diplomatic recognition of the Jewish state founded in 1948. As noted *supra*, this did not occur until 1994, forty six years later, despite the fact that the Vatican was the *first* sovereign state to recognize Nazi Germany in 1933... within 6 months of its founding.

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,* 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. He points out that Pius was forced to act within extremely difficult circumstances which included a creditable Nazi threat to kidnap or assassinate the Pope.

*The Vatican has yet to release its wartime archives for public view.

Fr. Blet and others also cite in Pius’s defense an article that appeared in the Israeli newspaper, “The Jewish Post,” in November, 1958 following the Pope’s death, which reads in pertinent part:

“...there was probably not a single ruler of our generation who did more to help the Jews in their hour of greatest tragedy, during the Nazi occupation of Europe, than the late Pope.”

Pius’ defenders, in short, contend that 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 and that his motives were influenced more by politics than gospel values.

Acknowledgement of Church Complicity

g. In March 1998, Italian bishops wrote an open letter to the Jewish community of Italy, in which they acknowledge “*lack of prophetic action*” on the part of the Church during the Holocaust, adding: “*We recall these events with dismay and also with a profound and conscientious teshuvah.*”*

**teshuvah* in Hebrew means “return” and is the word used to describe the concept of repentance in Judaism. Jews believe that only by atoning for their sins can they restore balance to their relationship with God and with their fellow human beings.

9. The Holocaust in Belgium

Nazi Germany occupied Belgium in May 1940, imposing military rule that lasted until 1944. Deportations took place in 1942 and 1943—50,000 Belgium’s Jews were killed, 40% survived. Factors resulting in survival included the organization of effective Jewish resistance; anti-German sentiment among Belgians; and assistance from Christians, communists, socialists, and the Belgian royal family.

Cardinal Josef-Ernst Van Roey

Cardinal Josef-Ernst Van Roey, Archbishop of Malines and primate of Belgium, chose not to make any public protests against anti-Jewish measures imposed by the occupation regime, deciding that more could be accomplished by working with, instead of antagonizing, the occupation leadership. He did, however, condemn Nazi racial theories, order his flock not to collaborate with the occupiers, and work behind the scenes to help Jews.

Bishop Joseph Kerkhofs

Bishop Joseph Kerkhofs of Liège actively supported rescue organizations that sheltered Jewish children in Catholic facilities. His motives may have been somewhat suspect, however, since before the war he had been the main inspiration for a Catholic organization dedicated to the conversion of Jews, and shortly after the war, in June 1945, he asked his clergy to pray for the “reprieve and conversion” of Jews.

Rescue and Resistance

Many Christians in Belgium were involved in rescue and resistance. Priests and nuns were especially active in shelter operations. Some rescue effort was organized, as in the case of activities of “Catholic Labor Youth” which assisted Jews in hiding. Catholic journalist **Emile Hambresin** and **Fr. Abbé Bolland** played important roles in efforts of the “Committee for the Defense of the Jews,” as did Catholic militant, **Brigitte Moens**, who provided the Committee with contacts in various church buildings where Jewish children could be sheltered. As occurred elsewhere in Occupied Europe, people of conscience acting on their own also engaged in rescue efforts.

Yad Vashem has recognized 1,247 Belgian “Righteous Gentiles,” including **Fr. Joseph André**, who saved hundreds of Jews, mostly children; **Georges** and **Marthe De Smet**, who went to great lengths to provide kosher meat for the two Jewish children hidden in their home, and **Frans** and **Margueritte Lemmens**, who hid three Jewish children during the last two years of the war and then kept them for another year after the war ended until arrangements could be made for them to travel to Israel.

10. The Holocaust in Switzerland

No European country remained truly neutral during WWII. Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland were officially “neutral,” but all worked to some extent with the Axis. Historical documents clearly show that if the Nazis had wanted to invade Switzerland, an invasion would have been quick and relatively easy. The reason Germany chose not to invade, however, was that Switzerland was more useful as an independent state than as a satellite. The Swiss, for example, made useful weapon components (aluminum for the Luftwaffe, spark plugs for jeeps taken from the Russians, timing devices for bombs, among other things), and, therefore, it would have been counterproductive to bomb their factories. The Swiss National bank, moreover, bought

gold from the *Reichsbank*, providing Swiss francs in exchange, which were then used to buy cobalt, nickel and tungsten from the other “neutral” countries.

An independent report commissioned by the Swiss government in 1997 concluded that Switzerland knowingly contributed to the Holocaust and cooperated with Nazi Germany during World War II. The 600-page report released in 2002 charged that Switzerland turned away thousands of Jewish refugees during the war, sending them back to Germany where the Swiss knew they faced death in Nazi death camps. After the war, the report continued, the Swiss government, museums, banks and businesses did not return assets to their rightful Jewish owners, many of whom were Nazi victims. Historians from Switzerland, the United States, Israel and Poland were part of a nine-member panel that spent five years compiling the report.

Acknowledgement of Church Complicity

The bishops of Switzerland issued a statement in 1997 which stated:

“...for centuries Christians and ecclesiastical teachings were guilty of persecuting and marginalizing Jews,” and we bishops *“shamefully declare”* that the perpetrators and collaborators in the Holocaust used religious motivations. *“It is in reference to these past acts of churches for which we proclaim ourselves culpable and ask pardon of the descendants of the victims...”*

11. The Holocaust in England

In a paper presented at the “Remembering for the Future” Conference in Oxford, England in July 1988, **Antony Kushner**, an English Holocaust scholar, summarized the Christian response in Britain to the Holocaust in this way:

“...although the atrocities committed by the Nazis created some sympathy towards European Jewry, the past legacy of anti-Semitism and ambivalence with regard to the Jews limited Christian comprehension of the full enormity of the Jewish plight. Individuals such as James Parkes, who wanted to adopt a different Christian approach to the Jews, were isolated, even within the Council of Christians and Jews, itself formed in 1942. As a result little was done in Britain to pressurize the government into pursuing a more vigorous rescue policy during the war.”

Information available in Great Britain regarding Nazi atrocities was extensive and for the most part, accurate. Many Britons refused to believe this information, in part because of ingrained anti-Semitism. The Catholic community was especially prone to disbelief, and in the fall of 1942 the *Catholic Herald* newspaper warned its readers “to avoid swallowing wholesale the current reports of the anti-Jewish persecution,” further asserting that *“for the exact truth we must wait until the war is over.”* The *Catholic Times* newspaper suggested that it was *“no secret that the recent wave of propaganda about*

German atrocities against the Jews was Soviet inspired.” At the same time, however, *The Tablet*, a leading Catholic journal, reported that “nothing like the horrors now going on in Eastern Europe has been seen before.” (see Kushner, “Ambivalence or Anti-Semitism: Christian Attitudes and Responses in Britain to the Crisis of European Jewry during the Second World War,” pp. 178-179.)

Some English Christians were seemingly unmoved by what was happening to Jews in Europe, believing that Jews themselves were responsible for their plight. The editor of the *Catholic Times* wrote, for example, that it was Jewish pride in being the Chosen People “that brought persecution on the Jews.” (Ibid. p.185). Sadly, most British church leaders, as elsewhere, were hostile to Jews with a few notable exceptions like **Bishop Matthew** and the Archbishop of Canterbury, **Cardinal Hinsley**. In 1943 **Cardinal Hinsley** in an address to the World Jewish Congress denounced “*with utmost vigor the persecution of the Jews by the Nazi oppressors,*” and called for retribution against the Nazis.

The Catholic minority in Britain may have been the most hostile to Jews, but the response of other Christians was not much better. It was, according to Kushner, an “ambivalent” response, supporting neither the destruction of the Jews nor a mass influx of Jewish refugees into Britain; sympathetic to the plight of Jewish victims but antagonistic to Judaism; opposed to Nazi anti-Semitism, but “ill disposed” to Jews at home. It was, in short, Kushner concludes, “a response that was inadequate to the crisis of European Jewry” (Ibid. p. 186).

12. The Holocaust in Denmark

Denmark’s rescue of Danish Jews is a unique story. Most of the country’s 8,000 Jews were saved by being ferried in boats to neutral Sweden, their rescue resulting from a combination of factors including the circumstances of Denmark’s occupation, the Danes’ contempt for the Nazis, the effectiveness of Danish resistance, and the cooperation of Lutheran laity and church leaders. It is true that the rescue effort was able to succeed because of foreknowledge of the impending Nazi invasion and because there was an easy escape route to Sweden; nevertheless, the rescue was remarkable because it was carried out by an *entire* nation, for which reason Yad Vashem awarded the title “Righteous Among the Nations” to the *entire* Danish population.

Holocaust scholar **Leon Stein**’s assessment of the Danish Lutheran Church is extremely positive: “*In Denmark the overwhelming majority of Lutheran laymen and pastors and the official institutional church opposed the Nazi persecution of the Jews and, when Denmark was occupied by the Nazis, joined the Danish resistance and rallied to help save the Jews of that country.*”

The **Danish Lutheran Church** and the **Jehovah Witnesses** set a high standard against which the response to the Holocaust of other institutional churches can be judged.

IV. Rescuers

“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

In every country they occupied, with the exception of Denmark and Bulgaria, the Nazis found many locals who were willing to cooperate fully in the murder of the Jews. This was particularly true in Eastern Europe, where there was a long standing tradition of virulent antisemitism, and where various national groups, which had been under Soviet domination (Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians), fostered hopes that the Germans would restore their independence. In several countries in Europe, there were local fascist movements which allied themselves with the Nazis and participated in anti-Jewish actions; for example, the Iron Guard in Romania and the Arrow Guard in Slovakia. On the other hand, in every country in Europe, there were courageous individuals who risked their lives to save Jews. In several countries, there were groups which aided Jews, e.g. Joop Westerweel's group in the Netherlands, *Zegota* in Poland, and the Assisi underground in Italy.

During the Holocaust thousands of Christians risked their lives to rescue Jews. Undeterred by Nazi threats and hostile surroundings, these “people of conscience” took Jewish children into their homes, convents and schools; concealed and provided for entire families; established “underground” passage routes for refugees to neutral countries, and, most importantly, demonstrated to victims of Nazi terrorism that compassion and decency still existed in what had become “hell on earth.” Of 8.86 million Jews who lived in Europe from 1938 to 1945, six million perished in the Holocaust. Hundreds of thousands more would have perished were it not for the intervention of thousands of individual Christians. Not nearly enough was done, however, to mitigate the horrors and carnage of the Holocaust. Churches as *institutions*, for the most part, with the notable exceptions of the **Danish Lutheran Church** and **Jehovah Witnesses**, as noted previously, failed to measure up to the high ethical standard demanded by Jesus' gospel of love, but, thankfully, many, many *individual* Christians did. And many of them paid with their lives. Additionally, there were uncounted acts of courage and, no doubt, many more acts of simple kindness which will never be known because the good people who performed them were either executed or acted anonymously.

Ordinary people of all backgrounds and denominations, believers and non-believers alike, defied the considerable dangers posed by reaching out with compassion to victims of *egregious* injustice, those termed the “‘least’ of my brethren.” (Mt.25:45) Rescue efforts were geographically diverse, with the degree of difficulty involved varying greatly. Rescue activities were impacted not only by the extent of Nazi control of a particular area, but also by the hostile or sympathetic attitudes of local populations. Additionally, sad to relate, not all rescuers acted from ethical convictions. Some offered assistance only in exchange for compensation.

Rescue operations in Occupied Western Europe, particularly in Denmark, Belgium, France, and Italy, succeeded in saving substantial numbers of Jewish lives. Danes, as noted *supra*, organized fishing-boat flotillas that, quite remarkably, helped save almost all Jews in Denmark. In France, a variety of groups and individuals rescued over 7000 children.

In Occupied Eastern Europe, where there was greater Nazi control and particularly pervasive and ingrained anti-Semitism, more obstacles existed for rescue efforts. Little organized assistance existed in Poland, for example, but thousands of individual Poles helped Jews, particularly in Warsaw during 1942-43. The few organized groups providing assistance included the Polish Catholic Scout movement and *Zegota* (Council for Aid to Jews). Additionally, some Polish church leaders engaged in rescue efforts and encouraged members of their flocks to do likewise.

To date over 20,000 people from 44 countries have been honored by the Israeli government at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as “Righteous Gentiles” or “Righteous Among the Nations.” The names of some 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 compassionate and courageous men and women of conscience saved thousands or perhaps saved 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.*"

Examples of help extended by the “Righteous Among the Nations” include;

Hiding Jews in rescuers' home or on their property

In the rural areas in Eastern Europe hideouts or bunkers were dug under houses, cowsheds and barns, where Jews would be concealed from sight. In addition to the constant threat of discovery and death, physical conditions in often dark, cold, airless and crowded places over long periods of time were extremely hard to bear. Rescuers, whose lives were likewise in jeopardy and subject to severe hardship, undertook to provide food – not an easy task for mostly poor

families in wartime – and to take care of the needs of those in hiding. Jews were also hidden in attics, hideouts in forests, and in any other place capable of providing concealment and shelter, including cemeteries, sewers, even animal cages in a zoo. Those hidden were generally presented as Christians or as relatives or adopted children. Jews were also hidden in city apartments, and children in convents and monasteries. In Western Europe Jews were mostly hidden in houses, farms or convents.

Providing false papers and false identities

For Jews to assume the identity of non-Jews, they needed false papers and help to establish existences under assumed identities. Rescuers in these instances were forgers or officials who produced false documents, including clergy who issued fake baptism certificates and foreign diplomats who issued visas or passports in contravention of their countries' policies. Diplomats in Budapest, for example, in late 1944 not only issued false documents, but also displayed their national flags on buildings to place hidden refugees under diplomatic immunity. Some rescuers, notably Oskar Schindler, save Jews from deportation by using the pretext of they were needed in the war effort

Smuggling and assisting Jews to escape

Rescuers helped Jews escape especially dangerous areas to less dangerous ones. They smuggled Jews out of ghettos and prisons and helped them cross borders into unoccupied countries or into areas where persecution was less intense, like neutral Switzerland, Italian-controlled regions, and to Hungary before German occupation in March 1944.

V. Some Concluding Thoughts

“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.”

Ellie Wiesel

“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.” **Franklin H. Littell**

“...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 ... 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 Cassidy**

January 26, 2011

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