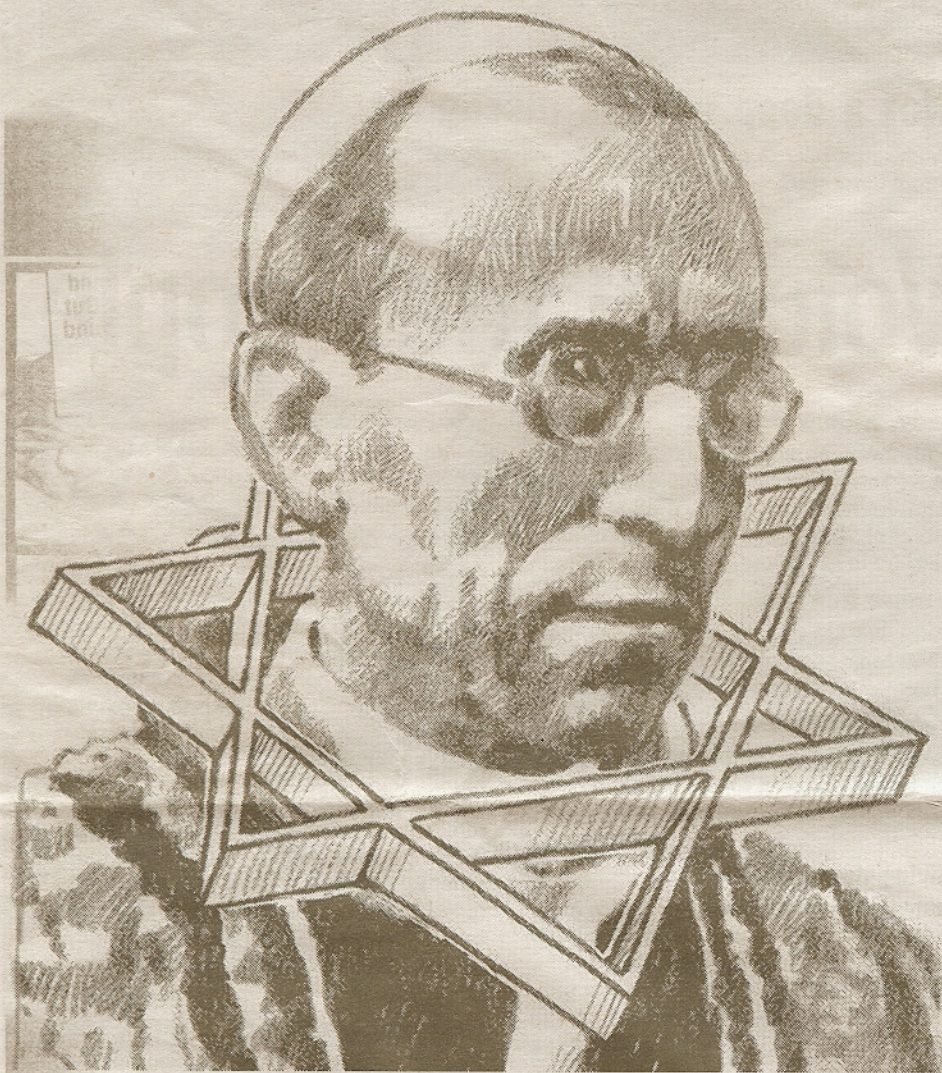


SUNDAY OPINIO

Stop persecuting Pius



WWII pontiff
– branded
'Hitler's Pope' –
did much to
save the Jews,
says a leading
interfaith activist

Illustration by Barrie Maguire

Pope Pius XII, born Eugenio Pacelli, was pontiff during WWII and considered by many one of the greatest heroes of the war. To others, he is simply "Hitler's Pope."

The 46-year-old controversy surrounding Pacelli casts a shadow over Pope Benedict's trip this week to the Holy Land. Benedict's visit will include a stop in Israel, where he will pay respects to Holocaust victims at Yad Vashem but refrain from visiting the museum there that features an exhibit critical of Pius. The exhibit includes a photo of the wartime pontiff with a caption that says he failed to protest the Holocaust and maintained a "neutral position."

In an effort to blast the academic logjam, I launched my own investigation into Pius' role during the Holocaust.

In 2007, Pope Benedict ordered the Vatican secret archives up to 1939 and other sections up to 1947 to be opened. Recently, he ordered the balance of the war year's archives to be opened as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, many historians say they will reserve their decision until the full archives are open. It surprises me that critics continue to

defend their outdated theories and assumptions without studying the newly opened archives covering the vast majority of Pacelli's ministry.

I, along with several researchers, have discovered many documents detailing little-known activities of Pacelli. In 1917, for example, he intervened to protect Jews in Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. In 1925 he helped the head of the World Zionist Organization meet with Vatican officials to promote a Jewish homeland in Palestine. We found a confidential U.S. Foreign Service document reporting the Pope's hatred of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, and a letter signed by Pacelli moving to overturn a proposed Polish law against kosher slaughtering. We located a nun's diary entry stating that her community received orders from the Pope to protect the Jews.

Hundreds of pages of documents can be viewed at pavethewayfoundation.org.

More evidence shows Pius secretly moved Jews out of Europe. We conducted dozens of video interviews, among them a witness account of a priest who revealed

a secret "underground railroad," directly ordered by the Pope, sending more than 10,000 Jews to the U.S. via the Dominican Republic. Many countries would not accept "Jews," so they were given false baptismal papers to travel as Catholics. Pius successfully stopped the deportation of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews when he appealed to the Regent of Hungary. Similarly, he desperately

tried to impact the deportation policies of many other countries to, in his words, "save this vibrant community."

Aware of Hitler's plan to kidnap him and seize the Vatican, Pius formed a government in exile and still managed to directly stop the arrest of Roman Jews on Oct. 16, 1943. In literally one day, the Vatican managed to hide, feed and support more than 7,000 Jews in Catholic institutions and private homes — all with German rifles posted 200 yards beneath Pius' windows.

Prominent Jewish and Israeli leaders like Albert Einstein, Golda Meir and Joseph Lichten, as well as the Italian Jewish community, praised Pius after the war. Upon Pius' death in 1958, Israeli

historian and diplomat Pinchas Lapide reported that many had suggested a forest of 860,000 trees be planted in the Judean hills to represent the Jews Pius had helped to save.

The public controversy began in 1963 with a negative portrayal of Pius in a fictitious play called "The Deputy." The highest ranking KGB agent to ever defect recently wrote an article detailing how the KGB planned, financed and edited this play in an operation called "SEAT TWELVE." This illicit KGB effort to discredit the church has been the most successful character assassination of the 20th century.

It's time for our "historians" to correct this academic negligence and honestly research the open archives.

Jewish teaching says, if you save one life you save all humanity. We must acknowledge what Pius actually did rather than criticize him for what he should have done. Pope Pius should be commended for his courageous actions that saved more Jewish lives than all the world's leaders combined.

Krupp, who is Jewish, along with his wife, Meredith, founded the Pave the Way Foundation. (ptwf.org)

By Gary Krupp

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