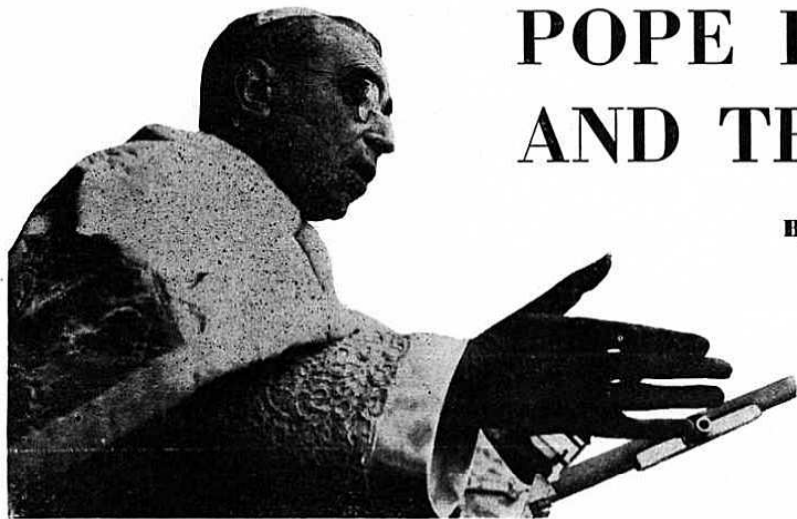


“...They should be welcomed as friends.”

# POPE PIUS XII AND THE JEWS

By JOSEPH L. LICHTEN



ON JUNE 4, 1944, when the Allies entered Rome, the Jewish News Bulletin of the British Eighth Army spoke out:

“To the everlasting credit of the people of Rome, and the Roman Catholic Church, the lot of the Jews has been made easier by their truly Christian offers of assistance and shelter. Even now, many still remain in places which opened their doors to hide them from the fate of deportation to certain death. . . . The full story of the help given to our people by the Church cannot be told for obvious reasons, until after the war.”

Today, 496 million Catholics all over the world, among them almost 35 million Americans, mourn the passing of their spiritual leader, Pope Pius XII. Representatives of other religions extend their profound sympathy to the Catholic world on its great loss. And today, almost fifteen years later, much more can be told about Pope Pius XII and his efforts in behalf of Jews at critical moments in world history.

It is known today that Pius XII was, to a large extent, personally instrumental in organized action to help Jewish victims of Nazism and Fascism. He made clear his profound concern in many ways. After the liberation of Rome, while there was apprehension over the fate of Jewish prisoners in Nazi-Fascist hands in Northern Italy and Germany, he made one of his most fervent pleas for brotherhood:

“For centuries the Jews have been most unjustly treated and despised. It is time they were treated with justice and humanity. God wills it and the Church wills it. St. Paul tells us that the Jews are our brothers. Instead of being treated as strangers, they should be welcomed as friends.”

Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli became Pontiff six months before the beginning of

World War II. For a long time, he realized that the world was on the brink of the bloodiest war in history. The preservation of peace—“the fairest of all God’s gifts”—was his driving concern. His temper and reactions were controlled by an acute, brilliant mind trained in the diplomatic service of the Vatican. It was a mind simultaneously active on several levels—diplomatic, humanitarian, charitable. During the early years of his reign, he made very few solemn political declarations lest he contribute to the aïgers and dissension of the world. His interest was not war, but peace.

But his opposition to Nazism and his efforts to help Jews in Europe were well known to the suffering world. Despite the fact that Cardinal Pacelli had spent 12 years in Germany as a Papal Nuncio and was instrumental in signing a Concordat between Germany and the Vatican, both Hitler and Mussolini—through a violent press campaign—tried to prevent his election as new Pontiff.

The day after his election, the *Berlin Morgenpost* said: “The election of Cardinal Pacelli is not accepted with favor in Germany because he was always opposed to Nazism and practically determined the policies of the Vatican under his predecessor.”

After the war started, on March 11, 1940, Von Ribbentrop, after a formal request for an audience, was received by the Pope. The German Foreign Secretary went into a lengthy harangue on the invincibility of the Third Reich, the inevitability of a Nazi victory, and the futility of Papal alignment with the enemies of the Fuehrer.

The Pope listened patiently and im-

passively to the very end of Von Ribbentrop’s speech. Then he opened an enormous register on his desk and, in perfect German, began a recital of the catalogue of persecutions inflicted by the Third Reich upon individuals in Poland. He listed the date, place and precise details of each crime. The audience was terminated, the Pope’s position clear.

PIUS XII’s humanitarian efforts to ease the lot of the Jews continued throughout the war. French, Dutch, Ukrainian bishops acted on behalf of Jews on instructions from the Pope. Their success or failure was determined, to a large extent, by the degree of cooperation received from the local population.

The Holy See established several offices devoted to rescue work among the victims of Nazis—including, of course, Jews. The Relief Commission and Commission for Help to Refugees were among them. The three letters—U.I.V. (Uffizio Informazioni Vaticano—Vatican Office of Information) are remembered by hundreds of thousands who first heard them in connection with news of relatives who had been missing, interned, or enslaved.

When the Fascist regime in Italy started to expel Jewish citizens from governmental and scientific positions, the Pope invited many of them to the Vatican. The president and two professors of the University of Rome and a famous geographer, all Jews ousted by the Fascists, received important positions in the Vatican City. Bernard Berenson received asylum in a villa near Florence, which belonged to the Minister of the Holy See to the Republic of San Marino. Under the flag of the Vatican’s diplomatic immunity, he and his family lived there until British and American troops arrived in the late summer of 1944.

When Rabbi Herzog appealed to Pius XII from Jerusalem, the Pontiff answered that he would do “all in my power to end the persecution of the Jews.”

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# THIS MONTH

OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

## Legacy Award

ADL BULLETIN readers are aware of the contributions made by TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, stage, screen and other mass media to the cause of good intergroup relations. For the past two years, the ADL BULLETIN has been detailing some of these contributions in its articles on the mass media. ("Editing the Airwaves" on page 6 is the latest in the series.) Now, to formally acknowledge some of the outstanding efforts of the mass media, the ADL National Commission has voted to present the 1958 America's Democratic Legacy Award to three great representatives of the field of communications:

- Look Magazine
- The New York Times
- The Columbia Broadcasting System

In previous years, the awards have gone to outstanding individuals—such as Presidents Eisenhower and Truman, and Eleanor Roosevelt—and to the Carnegie, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. Last year's winner was the 85th Congress for its passage of civil rights legislation.



The 1958 silver medallions will be presented to Gardner Cowles, president of Look, Orvil E. Dryfoos, president of the New York Times and Dr. Frank Stanton, president of CBS at an award luncheon on Sunday, December 7 as part of the 1958 annual meeting of the ADL National Commission and committees. (December 4-7 at the Savoy Hilton Hotel in New York.) CBS is contributing a national hour-long network dramatic show. The broadcast will also feature the actual presentation of the ADL awards.

## The Atlanta Bombing

THE BLAST that shattered The Temple (Reform Jewish congregation) on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Ga., was heard miles away. It occurred between 3:30 and 3:45 a.m., Sunday morning, October 12. The building was empty and there were no personal injuries. Damage was heavy, estimated at about \$200,000. The blast was set off by explosives placed behind a concrete column at a side entrance.

Police moved rapidly. A total of \$8,250 was offered for the arrest and conviction of those responsible; \$5,000 of it by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, \$2,000 by the First National Bank of Atlanta; \$250 by the State of Georgia (the legal state limit) and \$1,000 by the city of Atlanta. Mayor Hartsfield said this amount was in addition to the \$55,700 pledged by officials of Southern cities as a reward for bringing such dynamiters to justice. (This was pledged in May at a conference of officials of 37 Southern cities.)

ADL's Atlanta office worked closely with the police; it also maintained close contact

with Jewish community leaders in the city. ADL turned over to Atlanta police a list of anti-Semitic extremists in the area. ADL's national office was a focal point for investigative leads and a prime source for the flow of background information on anti-Semitic organizations and individuals who might have had a tie-in with the bombing.

President Eisenhower immediately expressed the nation's shock over The Temple bombing when he said, in New York, on October 12: "We must all share in the feeling of horror that anyone should want to desecrate a place of religion, be it chapel, a cathedral, a mosque, a church or a synagogue." The President said that he was asking J. Edgar Hoover to send him comprehensive reports on latest developments in the search for the bombers.

A sense of outrage swept across the nation. Civic and religious leaders of all faiths, north and south, urged immediate measures to put a halt to the criminal outbreak; they also expressed their sympathy to Atlanta's Jewish community.

On Monday, October 13, ADL national chairman Henry Edward Schultz said that ADL investigation indicated that the Atlanta, as well as the Nashville, Miami, and Jacksonville bombings last spring appeared to be the work of a group of old-line anti-Semitic agitators who "have drawn in younger and more daring recruits." He added: "It is significant that in all the cities, except Nashville, where there have been bombings of Jewish institutions, no efforts have yet been made to desegregate the schools. We now believe the attacks upon synagogues to be an organized plan on the part of this group. Their purpose is as much anti-Semitic as it is violent opposition to school integration."

The Atlanta bombing bore similarities to previous blasts. At the time of the explosion, the United Press International news service received an anonymous telephone call from a person indentifying himself as "General Gordon of the Confederate Underground." He said, "We have just blown up a temple," and added that there would be other such incidents. "This is the last empty building I'll blow up in Atlanta," he said.

(Previous synagogue bombings were also accompanied by anonymous telephone calls from the "Confederate Underground." They also occurred in the early Sunday morning hours and appeared to be highly skilled demolition jobs.)

Principal suspects arrested and indicted on October 17 have been identified with the National States Rights Party. (See exhibit page 3, on "The Thunderbolt.") Both Wallace H. Allen and George Bright were earlier arrested for picketing the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on July 27. Allen owns and runs the Wallace Allen Advertising Agency in Atlanta but his agency is not known in the advertising trade. Bright is a draftsman reportedly employed by an architectural firm in Atlanta. Robert and Richard Bowling have been active in the past in the Christian Anti-Jewish Party, headed by Jesse B. Stoner and Edward Fields, which flourished in the late 40's and early 50's. It staged a demonstration, complete with anti-Semitic placards, in front of the White House in August 1954. Kenneth Griffin is an auditor in the Georgia State Income Tax Division. He was also one of the pickets who tried to parade be-

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Thousands of Jewish refugees poured into Vatican City; thousands of others sought shelter in the basilicas and other buildings of the Holy See outside the Vatican wall. No less than 15,000 were sheltered at Castel Gandolfo. The Pope sent by hand a letter to the bishops instructing them to lift the enclosure from convents and monasteries so that they could become refuges for the Jews. When the Nazis forbade ritual slaughter, the Pope sent *shohetim* into Vatican City to perform the ritual slaughter there and store food for Jews sheltered there. Throughout the city, priests and nuns often at great personal risk smuggled Jews to places of sanctuary in churches, monasteries and other institutions. More than 180 places of refuge were made available in Rome and secret asylum given to more than 7000 fugitive Jews.

As a result of these activities, often reported in the official press of the Holy See, the Fascist press even referred to the *Osservatore Romano* as "a mouthpiece of the Jews."

At one point, Hitler threatened to enter Vatican City. The German Ambassador in Rome talked him out of it.

Once, the Chief Rabbi of Rome was summoned and told that he was expected to deliver to German authorities—by noon of the following day—one million lire and one hundred pounds of gold. If he failed, the Nazis said, they would order the immediate dispersal of Jews—which meant atrocities and death. The Jewish community of Rome did not have one hundred pounds of gold and the Chief Rabbi appealed for help to Pius XII. The Pope immediately instructed the Vatican treasurer to raise whatever amount was still needed. In less than a day, by melting down religious vessels, one hundred pounds of gold were raised.

Italian Jews know how much they owed to Pius XII. A prominent Jewish citizen of Rome declared: "Our Catholic brothers have done more for us than we can ever do to repay." And another Jew, at a meeting of the National Committee of Liberation, said: "It was in the name of the frankest feeling of Brotherhood that the Church did its utmost to rescue our threatened people from destruction. The supreme ecclesiastical authorities and all those priests who suffered for us in imprisonment and in concentration camps have our eternal gratitude."

After the war, Pius XII addressed a group of European Jews who had come to the Vatican to thank him "for his generosity on their behalf during their persecution." The Pope, obviously moved by the demonstration, told them that the Church "... could rise above all narrow and arbitrary limits created by human selfishness and racial passions."