

## CARDINAL STEPINAC, POPE PIUS XII, AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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*Like Pius XII, who fought to undermine the Nazis, Croatian Archbishop (later Cardinal) Aloysius Stepinac battled with the Nazi-like Ustashi regime. Like Pius, Stepinac was known to those close to him as a staunch opponent of Fascism, but also like Pius, his reputation was smeared by false accusations after the war. In fact, evidence that was manufactured by Communist authorities after the war to defame Stepinac, and which has since been established as false, has made its way into the historical analysis of Pius XII's papacy. That false evidence continues to confound scholars and distort their appreciation of efforts undertaken by Pius and Stepinac to combat evil regimes and protect victims of all different backgrounds.*

Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Stepinac both advanced to high positions in the Church at a young age. In 1934, Pope Pius XI nominated the thirty-six year old Stepinac as the coadjutor archbishop of Zagreb. At that time he was the youngest bishop in the world.<sup>1</sup> In 1937, though still below the prescribed canonical age of 40, Stepinac succeeded Anton Bauer as the archbishop of Zagreb, becoming one of the youngest archbishops in the Church's history. He served as Archbishop of Zagreb from 1937 until his death in 1960.

Two years after Stepinac was consecrated archbishop of Zagreb, Eugenio Pacelli was elected Pope, taking the name Pius XII. World War II broke out later that same year. Within two more years, a Nazi-puppet regime took over in Croatia. Ante Pavelic and his Ustashi government unleashed a wave of brutality that shocked even the Nazis. "Almost immediately, [Archbishop] Stepinac used his position to speak out against the treatment of Jews and Orthodox Christians."<sup>2</sup> Like Pope Pius XII, he offered shelter to those who were in need, and he inspired others to do the same.

Stepinac's words and actions before, during, and after the war show that he was a good man. In 1936 he sponsored the work of a committee aiding Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. In December 1938 he wrote to priests in Zagreb asking them to help the persecuted Jews. Later that month he founded *Action for Aid for Jewish Refugees*, placing the organization under his personal protection.<sup>3</sup> He wrote to wealthy Catholics reminding them that it was their "Christian

duty” to support Jewish exiles.<sup>4</sup> During the war, Meir Touval-Weltmann, a member of a commission to help European Jews, wrote a letter of thanks for all that the Holy See had done and enclosed a memorandum which stated: Dr. Stepinac has done everything possible to aid and ease the unhappy fate of the Jews in Croatia.<sup>5</sup>

In March 1938, addressing a group of university students, Archbishop Stepinac condemned the racist ideologies that were prevailing throughout many parts of Europe:

[E]ventually, at death, all racial differences disappear. Therefore, man will not be justified in God’s judgment by belonging to this or that race, but by honest life and good deeds. So if love toward a nation crosses the borders of sound reason, then it is no longer love, but passion, and passion is neither of use, nor lasting.... Therefore love toward your own nation is not contradictory to love for the whole of mankind; they complement each other. All of the nations are children of God.<sup>6</sup>

This was a view that he maintained all of his life.

When the Nazis first came to power, Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) negotiated a concordat on behalf of the Holy See. He has been severely and unjustly criticized for that action. In reality, that agreement helped many victims escape Nazi persecution.<sup>7</sup> From the very beginning, Cardinal Pacelli was an outspoken critic of the Nazi regime. Similarly, at first, Archbishop Stepinac tried to work with the Ustashi government. He could not, however, condone the regime’s racist or nationalistic policies. As he learned of the extent of the brutality, and after having received direction from Rome, Stepinac became a strong opponent of Pavelić and the Ustashi. By May 1943, the Vatican had a list of 34 separate interventions by Stepinac against the persecution of Serbs and Jews in Croatia.<sup>8</sup> The files of the German police attaché in Zagreb, show that Stepinac was often identified as a traitor by the Nazis and the Ustashi.<sup>9</sup>

Some critics say that Pius XII did not oppose the Nazis until late in the war. As many scholars have demonstrated, that is a ridiculous charge. Similarly, some of Stepinac’s critics have argued that he opposed the Ustashi only late in the war, when it was clear that they would be defeated. In reality, however, relations between Pavelić and Archbishop Stepinac were strained from the beginning. The Archbishop did not participate in the welcome extended to Pavelić when he arrived at the Zagreb railroad station in April 1941.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the traditional *Te Deum Laudamus* (a hymn of thanksgiving for a special

blessing) was not sung at the cathedral on the occasion of Pavelić's birthday. Pavelić attended Mass at the Zagreb Cathedral only one time in the four years he was in power, and on that occasion Stepinac failed to greet him as the Ustashi leader had expected.<sup>11</sup>

The very same month that the Ustashi came into power, they enacted Nuremberg-like racial laws. As his biographer reported, "Stepinac, the conscience of Croatia, thundered in his cathedral and wrote to the Pavelić government against those racist laws."<sup>12</sup>

The thesis of the God-made personal dignity of all men is elaborated by Archbishop Stepinac in all his sermons, in all his pastoral letters, and in all his deeds. It was reiterated in his contacts with Dr. Pavelić and with other officials of the Independent State of Croatia. The result was that, despite Nazi pressures, Croatia first mitigated and soon after completely abolished the infamous anti-semitic laws. It was through Croatia that many Jews, including a number who became high officials in the State of Israel, found their way to safety.<sup>13</sup>

Stepinac rescued hundreds of refugees through direct action, but many more "through his sermons in which he vigorously condemned the implementation of Racial Laws."<sup>14</sup> In fact, Stepinac's sermons against the Ustashi abuses were so strong that beginning in 1941, the Church was not permitted to publish them. Catholics and others opposed to the regime, however, copied and circulated them in secret.<sup>15</sup> In Italy, the same was done with Pius XII's radio broadcasts.

In October 1941, the Ustashi destroyed the main synagogue in Zagreb. Shortly thereafter, at the cathedral, Stepinac roared: "A House of God, of whatever religion, is a holy place. Whoever touches such a place will pay with his life. An attack on a House of God of any religion constitutes an attack on all religious communities."<sup>16</sup> In February 1942, Stepinac protested to the Minister of the Interior about the destruction of Orthodox churches.<sup>17</sup> The Associated Press reported that by 1942 Stepinac had become a harsh critic of the Ustashi, condemning its Agenocidal policies, which killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and Croats.<sup>18</sup>

In 1943, Hitler both planned and threatened to invade the Vatican and to kill the Pope, if necessary. That same year, Stepinac traveled to Rome where he openly criticized the Nazis. As a result, the Germans and Italians demanded that he be removed from office.<sup>19</sup> Pope Pius XII refused to remove him, but he warned Stepinac that his life was in danger.<sup>20</sup> The archbishop, in turn, went to those who were under his

protection and warned them that they should make other plans in case he were not be able to protect them much longer.<sup>21</sup> This is very similar to what took place in Rome. Still, neither Pius nor Stepinac would slow down.

On July 7, 1943 the BBC broadcast a story about Stepinac's brave resistance to the Ustashi and his efforts to protect the victims:

The Archbishop of Zagreb has strongly and sharply condemned the deportations of Jews and other ethnic groups that were based on Nazi theories and Nuremberg Laws.... Archbishop Stepinac, in his weekly address, stated that every people and every race on earth has a right to exist and to human treatment. If God gave this right to mankind there is no government on earth that can take it away.<sup>22</sup>

That same month, the BBC and *Voice of America* began broadcasting Stepinac's sermons across occupied Europe.<sup>23</sup>

One sermon from October 31, 1943 was typical of many that the archbishop gave on the dignity of all mankind. He said:

We have always asserted the value in public life of the principles of the eternal law of God without regard to whether it applied to Croats, Serbs, Jews, Bohemians, Catholics, Mohammedans, or Orthodox.... The Catholic Church knows nothing of races born to rule and races doomed to slavery.

The Catholic Church knows races and nations only as creatures of God... for it the Negro of Central Africa is as much a man as the European. For it the king in a royal palace is, as a man, exactly the same as the lowest pauper or gypsy in his tent.... We condemn all injustice; all murder of innocent people; all burning of peaceful villages; all killings, all exploitation of the poor....<sup>24</sup>

A German Nazi general in Zagreb once declared: "If any bishop in Germany were speaking this way, he would not descend alive from his pulpit!"<sup>25</sup>

Like Pope Pius, Archbishop Stepinac backed his statements with action. In a confidential report sent to Croatian clergy in 1941, he wrote: "The role and task of Christians is in the first place to save people."<sup>26</sup> He instructed his priests to provide baptismal certificates to endangered Jews and Serbs whenever they were requested.<sup>27</sup> This often

permitted them to avoid persecution by pretending to be Roman Catholic.<sup>28</sup> (It is worth noting that Pius XII also used this technique to deceive the Nazis when they occupied Rome.)

In January 1941, Stepinac wrote to Rome about 200 Jewish orphans, aged 7 to 17, that he was assisting.<sup>29</sup> He also directed the rescue of numerous homeless, orphaned Serbian children of Chetnik and Partisan parents from the concentration camps.<sup>30</sup> He placed the children in foster homes or with Catholic institutions, leaving instructions that they were not to be brought up as Catholics.<sup>31</sup> Stepinac also allowed many refugees to hide in monasteries, as Pius sheltered refugees in the Vatican and other Church buildings around Rome.

Although critics have tried to link the Holy See and the Ustashi government, in actuality the Vatican rebuked Pavelić, and it never extended diplomatic recognition to the Independent State of Croatia (“NDH”).<sup>32</sup> In May 1941, a month after coming to power, Pavelić traveled to Rome to sign the Rome Pact, which ceded Dalmatia to Italy.<sup>33</sup> This greatly distressed Stepinac, who had already declined to join Pavelić on an earlier diplomatic mission.<sup>34</sup> He “flatly refused” to accompany Pavelić on this journey to Rome.<sup>35</sup>

In Rome, Pavelić was greatly angered because the Vatican refused him the diplomatic audience with the Secretary of State that he had requested.<sup>36</sup> “On May 18, 1941, Pavelić was informed that he would be given an audience as a private individual, ‘without publicity.’ His delegation was invited to attend a public audience as ordinary members of the faithful. The whole experience was demeaning.”<sup>37</sup> (The notes of Cardinal Tardini the following year said: “Pavelić is furious... because... he is treated worse by the Holy See than the Slovaks”).<sup>38</sup>

Stepinac’s bravery is reflected in an incident that took place during the German occupation. Hans Frank, the Nazi official in charge of the occupation continually hinted that he wanted to be invited to dinner at the archbishop’s residence. Presumably, this would help legitimize Frank’s position. Finally the invitation came. When Frank sat down to dine with the archbishop, he was served a meager meal of black bread (made in part from acorns), beet jelly, and ersatz coffee. Stepinac calmly explained that this was the only food he could obtain with the ration coupons provided by the Nazis, and he certainly could not risk the arrest of himself or one of his household servants by trading on the black market.<sup>39</sup>

During the time of the NDH, the Ustashi forced thousands of Orthodox Serbs to convert to Roman Catholicism.<sup>40</sup> The matter became such a significant issue that Archbishop Stepinac felt the need to report on it to Rome in December 1941.<sup>41</sup> The following month, the Holy See

expressly repudiated forced conversions in a memorandum sent to Yugoslavia's representative to the Holy See.<sup>42</sup>

Some critics argue that Stepinac engaged in forcible conversions. Not only is there no evidence of this, he openly opposed forced conversions, and he recognized that they were not of value to the Church. He sent confidential instructions to his priests:

When persons of Jewish or Orthodox faith who are faced with the danger of death come to you to be converted to Catholicism, accept them so that you may save human lives. Do not demand any special religious knowledge of them, for the Orthodox are Christians as we are while the Jewish faith is from whence the Catholic faith has its roots. The role and duty of Christians are primarily to save lives. When these times of madness and savageness are over, they who converted out of conviction will remain in our Church while the rest will return to their own faith once the danger is over.<sup>43</sup>

After the war, he noted that there had been very few true conversions among the Serbs.<sup>44</sup> According to a report of the British Naval Intelligence Division, the "Roman Catholic clergy, following the example of monsignor Stepinac, the Zagreb Archbishop, energetically protested against Ustashi persecutions of Serbs and Jews, as well as against [the] government's attempts for forced conversion to Roman Catholicism"<sup>45</sup>

In 1944-45, Communist partisans under Marshal Josip Broz—better known as Tito—conquered the Balkans and occupied Zagreb. Soon, a Serbian-dominated Communist regime, the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, had control of the nation. More than 150,000 Croats were killed.<sup>46</sup> The new government also undertook persecution of the Catholic Church, confiscating property, closing seminaries and schools, banning Masses, and persecuting clergy.<sup>47</sup>

Before coming to power, the Communists "used Cardinal Stepinac's speeches in their propaganda, as the Cardinal always spoke against the Nazi occupation and against the violation of human rights committed by Pavelic."<sup>48</sup> Now, however, he was a threat. It "bothered the new regime that the Catholic Church was the only organization outside of its control."<sup>49</sup> On May 15, 1945 Stepinac's car was confiscated. Two days later, Tito had him arrested.

The archbishop was held for 17 days. On the day after his release, Tito summoned Stepinac for a face-to-face meeting. The Communist leader wanted the Croatian Church to sever its ties with

Rome. Stepinac threw down the gauntlet: "I insist upon freedom for all the people. You have given no sign that you intend to respect the Constitution. I am going to resist you on every move in which you disregard the Constitution and the people."<sup>50</sup>

A synod of bishops met to discuss Tito's persecution of the Church. They issued a pastoral letter saying that they were willing to work with the state for the good of the people, but at the same time they condemned "all ideologies and social systems not based on the eternal principles of Christian Revelation, but on shallow material foundations, that is to say philosophic atheism."<sup>51</sup> They protested the killing of over 200 Catholic priests and believers,<sup>52</sup> the suppression of youth education, the requisitioning of Church property, the destruction of graves, and the confiscation of the Catholic press and print shops. Stepinac was the President of the Bishops Conference and the first signatory of the letter. It was read on September 30, 1945 in churches across the country.

Within days, the government launched an intense propaganda campaign against the Church. Priests and bishops were attacked physically. "Communist propagandists systematically accused Catholics and other 'reactionary' groups of collaborating with Hitler."<sup>53</sup> Serbian radio condemned Stepinac as a war criminal. State authorities "paved the way for the archbishop's arrest, creating a public image of Archbishop Stepinac as a criminal and the Catholic Church as a fascist collaborator and enemy of the people and state."<sup>54</sup>

Tito informed the Holy See that he wanted it to recall Stepinac and replace him with another archbishop. When Pius XII refused the request, the stage was set for Stepinac's re-arrest. Fearful that the Communists might round up all Catholic activists for imprisonment or even execution, Stepinac dissolved all Catholic associations rather than surrendering their membership lists to government authorities.<sup>55</sup>

The Communists used the criminal justice system as a "tool for solving political problems."<sup>56</sup> "[T]rials were quick, effective, and merciless, without any objectivity."<sup>57</sup> The Evangelical bishop, Zagreb's Mufti, the head of the Croatian Orthodox Church, and others were tried and executed. Even religious leaders who had no connections to Ustashi were executed.

On September 18, 1946 Yugoslav authorities arrested Stepinac and charged him with six criminal counts, including: helping to organize Ustashi crimes; collaboration with Pavelić and the Ustashi; responsibility for crimes committed by chaplains in the Ustashi army; forceful conversions of Serb Orthodox to Roman Catholicism, permitting the Catholic press to be used by the Ustashi for propaganda, and hiding evidence to protect Pavelić and the Ustashi.<sup>58</sup>

The trial started on September 30, 1946. That day, *Time Magazine* reported on Stepinac's defiance of the Ustashi and the Communists:

Archbishop Stepinac lashed out at the Nazi "master race" idea and condemned the execution of hostages as "inhuman and anti-Christian."

He was just as fearless in condemning Communist outrages. In 1945, the Archbishop wrote in a pastoral letter: "The enemies of the Catholic Church . . . the followers of the materialistic communism . . . have in our Croatia exterminated with fire and sword priests and the more eminent of the faithful . . . The number of dead priests is 243; 169 are in prison."<sup>59</sup>

Louis Breier, the president of the Jewish community in the USA, organized a protest in New York City. He declared: "This great man was tried as a collaborator of Nazism. We protest against this slander. He has always been a sincere friend of Jews, and was not hiding this even in times of cruel persecutions under the regime of Hitler and his followers. Alongside Pope Pius XII, Archbishop Stepinac was the greatest protector of persecuted Jews in Europe."<sup>60</sup>

The trial was widely criticized in the American press. The prosecution had had fifteen months of open access to captured government and church documents in which to prepare its case. Stepinac's lawyers were restricted to a one-hour visit to their client and one week in which to collect evidence for the defense.<sup>61</sup> American Archbishop Joseph Hurley was present as the representative of Pope Pius XII. Stepinac was not, however, permitted to consult with him during the proceedings.<sup>62</sup> Many defense witnesses were not permitted to testify, and much of the defendant's evidence was disallowed. Key prosecution evidence was manufactured. As one author put it:

The trial was a farce. The testimony of witnesses was falsified in court reports. Witnesses were threatened. Judges delivered long monologues, and provided the "appropriate" answers to their own questions. The courtroom was packed with Communist agitators, whose vocal demonstrations were heavily covered by the government-controlled media; only five Church representatives were allowed to be present.<sup>63</sup>

One hundred fifty priests from Zagreb risked arrest by issuing a statement in support of their archbishop,<sup>64</sup> and Pope Pius XII said: “We have the right and the duty to reject such false accusations.” He called it “a very sad trial.”<sup>65</sup>

On October 11, Stepinac was found guilty of all six counts and sentenced to 16 years at hard labor, but due to protests and indignation throughout the democratic world, he was not made to do the hard labor. Instead, he was kept “in a small cell, almost completely isolated from the outside world.”<sup>66</sup> The week after the sentence was announced, the Holy See excommunicated “all those who have participated physically or morally” in this grave offense against the “liberty and dignity [of one of] the Church’s sacred pastors.”<sup>67</sup>

Foreign observers were permitted to visit Stepinac while he was in prison, but Tito used these visits for propaganda. For instance, in August 1947, *Time* reported on seven Protestant clergymen and a physician who visited Stepinac in his captivity. *Time* described the group as including the “chairman of the American-Soviet Friendship Council and longtime friend of the Communist Party” and an “anti-Roman Catholic editor...”<sup>68</sup> When they got home, the group said that “reports of mistreatment of Stepinac were false and provocative... He is in good health and there are no restrictions on his religious liberty... He says Mass daily in a chapel next to his cell.”<sup>69</sup> New York’s *Communist Daily Worker* newspaper reported that one of the clergymen said: “The Stepinac case is one of the main reasons for our coming to Yugoslavia. We are certain Stepinac should be imprisoned.”<sup>70</sup> *Time*, however, warned its readers that “Reports from such trips aren’t worth the paper they are printed on.”<sup>71</sup> (One of the clergymen wrote: “I absolutely cannot subscribe to statements... on the justification of Stepinac’s jail sentence.”)<sup>72</sup>

The following week, *Time* reported: “If the committee of seven clergymen had not been ‘hand-picked’ by Tito, some of its members had apparently gone to Yugoslavia predisposed to a rosy view. One of the visitors... was ‘exposed’ last week... as an ex-holder of a [Communist] party card.”<sup>73</sup> *Time* then turned to the Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Dalmatia, who was living in exile in the United States. He said: “I was shocked... I cannot understand how as servants of God [the seven ministers] can accept so gladly an invitation from one of the most ruthless tyrannies the world ever has known. I can only ask these clergymen whether they would have thought it proper to accept an invitation from Hitler... The tactics used by Tito, as by Stalin, are to divide the churches so as to weaken their power to unite for resistance.”

In 1950 a group of American senators sought to allow American aid to Yugoslavia only on the condition of Archbishop Stepinac's release. Realizing the need for better relations with the West, and also concerned about the archbishop's declining health, in 1951 Tito said he was willing to release Stepinac on one condition. As *Time* magazine explained:

Marshal Tito, busy mending fences, made a direct offer to the Vatican last month to release imprisoned Archbishop Stepinac. Tito's condition: that Stepinac leave Yugoslavia the moment he is released. Last week the Vatican reported Tito's offer—and its own reply: no bargain. "The Holy See would be pleased if Monsignor Stepinac were freed," said the answer to Tito. "The Holy See is informed, however, that that Most Excellent Prelate, being convinced of his innocence, prefers to remain near his faithful."<sup>74</sup>

Finally, in December 1951, Tito ordered Stepinac to be released from his cell and sent to house arrest in his native village of Krasic.<sup>75</sup>

Almost immediately, Pope Pius XII announced that Stepinac would be elevated to the cardinalate. Pius said: "this Croatian Cardinal is the most important priest of the Catholic Church."<sup>76</sup> In response Tito's government severed diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Stepinac did not go to Rome to be invested as a Prince of the Church, because he knew that the Yugoslav government would not permit him to return home. He explained: "To leave Yugoslavia in these times would mean to abandon my post and to abandon my people.... I shall stay here, if need be, until my death."<sup>77</sup>

Stepinac also refused to go abroad for treatment of a blood-clotting problem from which he suffered. Two American physicians were, however, permitted to come to Yugoslavia to treat him. The disease, polycythemia (sometimes called 'reverse leukemia'), involves an excess of red blood cells.<sup>78</sup> It prompted Stepinac to joke: "I am suffering from an excess of reds."<sup>79</sup>

In 1957 Cardinal Stepinac wrote his "Spiritual Testament." In it he expressly forgave all of his persecutors. Unfortunately, his health grew worse, he developed congested lungs, and died on February 10, 1960.<sup>80</sup> *Time* magazine reported that he had: "never worn his cardinal's red robe. But no living prince of the Roman Catholic Church had a better right to it than Alojzije Cardinal Stepinac.... For years, he was a silent but unforgotten symbol of the war between Communism and Christianity."<sup>81</sup>

In 1992, Croatia came out from under the thumb of Communism. One of the first acts of Parliament in the newly independent state of Croatia was to issue a declaration condemning “the political trial and sentence passed on Cardinal Alojzij Stepinac in 1946.”<sup>82</sup> Stepinac was condemned, declared the Parliament: “because he had acted against the violence and crimes of the communist authorities, just as he had acted during the whirlwind of atrocities committed in World War II, to protect the persecuted, regardless of the national origin or religious denomination.”<sup>83</sup>

In 1985, Stepinac’s prosecutor publically admitted that Stepinac had been framed, and that he was tried only because he refused to sever ties between Rome and Croatia.<sup>84</sup> If only Stepinac had agreed to head an independent Catholic Church, he would not have been brought to Court.<sup>85</sup> As Yugoslavian political dissident Milovan Dilas later said, the problem with “Stepinac was not his policy towards Ustashe, but towards the Communists.”<sup>86</sup>

In 1946, prior to Stepinac’s trial, the Communist Party had published a book that contained forged and carefully selected and edited documents designed to make Stepinac and the Catholic Church look bad.<sup>87</sup> In the 1960s, Italian writer Carlo Falconi sought permission from the Yugoslav authorities to research Croatian archives for a book that he was writing on Pope Pius XII. Party officials eventually handed over *some* original documents and provided Falconi with a copy of the 1946 book. Neither Falconi nor the others who came after him knew that the evidence had been carefully manufactured to assure that Stepinac appeared to have been a collaborator of the Ustashi (and that Pius appeared sympathetic to the Nazis). He was not given access to any materials or archives that could contradict the communist-manufactured propaganda. Thus, on the basis of forged and carefully selected documents assembled by the Yugoslav secret police, Falconi wrote his book, *The Silence of Pius XII*.<sup>88</sup>

Falconi’s book was extremely successful. It shaped much of the early scholarship on Pope Pius XII, and it remains much cited to this day. John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope* made much use of the materials Falconi had used. In fact, Cornwell cited Falconi by name nine times, and he praised Falconi’s “painstaking” research.<sup>89</sup> Falconi and the works that built upon his book have tainted the entire investigation into Pope Pius XII. As Croatian scholar Jure Kristo has explained: “The documents which both men [Falconi and Cornwell] used had, of course, been assembled by the Yugoslav secret police and fed to Falconi in order to compromise Pope Pius XII as ‘Hitler’s Pope.’”<sup>90</sup> These documents have confounded scholars of Pope Pius XII for decades.

Stepinac was beatified on October 3, 1998 at the Shrine of the Mother of God of Bistrica—Croatia’s national shrine. Pope John Paul II said: “One of the outstanding figures of the Catholic Church, having endured in his own body and his own spirit the atrocities of the Communist system, is now entrusted to the memory of his fellow countrymen with the radiant badge of martyrdom.”<sup>91</sup> The deacon of the Serbian Orthodox Church said: “I, as a person and a priest, wish to express my admiration for this move.”<sup>92</sup> Stepinac was twice nominated to be named a *Righteous Gentile* at Yad Vashem. Today in the United States, he is remembered at schools, streets, and parishes that bear his name.

Croatia under the Ustashi was comparable to Germany under the Nazis. Religious leaders had limited options. Aloysius Stepinac, however, was a strong leader who directly confronted the evil. “During the Second World War, Stepinac never turned his back on refugees, or the persecuted. His door was always open not only for Croatians, but also Jews, Serbs and Slovenes that needed his help.”<sup>93</sup> In the face of evil, he remained strong, and the world is better for it.

## Notes

1. Francis H. Esterovich, *Spiritual Portrait of Cardinal Stepinac*, Crown and Cross (September 1962) at 274-75. Eugenio Pacelli (Pius XII) was made bishop at age 41.
2. Christopher Heffron, *Croatia's Fearless Defender of Life*, St. Anthony's Messenger, Feb. 2007.
3. Esther Gitman, *A Question Of Judgment: Dr. Alojzije Stepinac And The Jews*, Review of Croatian History 2/2006, no.1, 47, 58.
4. Heffron, *supra* note 2.
5. Le dr. *Weltmann au délégué apostolique à Istanbul Roncalli*, June 11, 1943, Actes et Documents, vol. 9, page 337, no. 226 (footnote 4).
6. *Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac - a true Catholic patriot!* (April 18, 2006) << <http://godfamilynation.blogspot.com/2006/04/cardinal-alojzije-stepinac-true.html>>>
7. See Ronald J. Rychlak, *The 1933 Concordat Between Germany and the Holy See: A Reflection of Tense Relations*, 2001 The Digest 23 (Syracuse University).
8. *Le cardinal Maglione au visiteur apostolique à Zagreb Marcone*, April 2, 1943, Actes et Documents, vol. 9, page 218, no. 130, appendix III (Notes de la Secrétairerie d'Etat). See also *L'archevêque de Zagreb Stepinac au pape Pie XII*, February 13, 1941, Actes et Documents, vol. 4, page 385, no. 261. The British Minister to the Holy See during the war years, Sir Francis D=Arcy Osborne, wrote that Stepinac always acted according to the Awell-intended dictates of his conscience. *Confidential Letter to Oliver Harvey from D=Arcy Osborne*, February 26, 1947, British Public Record Office, FO 371/67917 60675.
9. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 56.
10. *Id.* at 51.
11. *Id.*
12. John Prcela, *Archbishop Stepinac in his Country's Church-State Relations* 33-34 (Scottsdale: Associate Book Publishers, 1990); Richard Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac* 295-99. (1953).
13. *Id.* at 34.
14. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 51.
15. *Id.* at 70.
16. Darko Zubrinic, *Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac and saving the Jews in Croatia during the WW2* (Zagreb, 1997) <<<http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/stepinac.html> (reporting that this sermon was witnessed by Dr. Amiel Shomrony, former secretary to the Chief Rabbi of Zagreb).

17. Stephen Lackovic, *The Case Against Tito* 23 (memorandum, 1947); S. Alexander, *The Triple Myth* 163 (1987). See also *Le cardinal Maglione au visiteur apostolique à Zagreb Marcone*, February 21, 1942, Actes et Documents, vol. 8, page 442, no. 289.
18. Rick Hinshaw, *Cardinal's Past*, Chicago Tribune, October 17, 1998, at 26.
19. Michal Savor, *Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac*, "A Servant of God and the Croatian People" (revised ed. 2001) <<<http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/stepinac.html>>>. See also *Le visiteur apostolique à Zagreb Marcone au cardinal Maglione*, May 15, 1943, Actes et Documents, vol. 9, page 297, no. 189 (Stepinac's protest against actions of Italian troops).
20. Savor, *supra* note 19. In 1943, Stepinac said that he expected to be killed by the Ustashi or the Communists. Alexander, *supra* note 17, at 95. "There is some real evidence to support a widespread belief that some Ustasha members plotted to kill Stepinac in order to silence his voice." Josip Stilinovic, *Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac - A True Catholic Nationalist!* The Catholic World Report (1998) <<<http://irish-nationalism.net/forum/showthread.php?t=5048>>>. He survived a failed assassination attempt in 1945. *Id.*
21. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 47, 51.
22. *Id.* at 57. On Stepinac's many protests to the deportation of Jews and others, see Actes et Documents, vol. 9, pages 33, 60 (editors' introduction).
23. Savor, *supra* note 19.
24. Pattee, *supra* note 12, at 283-86
25. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 70 (quoting General Glaise von Herstenau).
26. R. J. Wolff, *Catholics, the State and the European Right* 57 (1986).
27. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 67.
28. Zubrinic, *supra* note 16.
29. *L'archevêque de Zagreb Stepinac au cardinal Maglione*, January 9, 1943, Actes et Documents, vol. 8, page 409, no. 253.
30. Wolff, *supra* note 26, at 57. See also *Le P. Tacchi Venturi au cardinal Maglione*, January 20, 1942, Actes et Documents, vol. 8, page 416, no. 261 (regarding Jewish orphans in Croatia).
31. Alexander, *supra* note 17, at 36.75.
32. H. Jansen, *Pius XII: chronologie van een onophoudelijk protest* 151 (2003). See also *Cardinal Maglione au l'archevêque de Zagreb Stepinac*, July 11, 1941, Actes et Documents, vol. 5, page 81, no. 9 (Holy See's position on recognition of Croatia); Notes du Mgr. Tardini, July 22, 1941, Actes et Documents, vol. 5, page 90, no. 17. Pavelif had been close to Mussolini in the 1930s, at a time when the Church was much at odds with Il Duce.

33. Prcela, *supra* note 12, at 33.
34. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 47, 50.
35. Prcela, *supra* note 12, at 33.
36. *Minutes of August 7, 1941*, British Public Record Office FO 371/30175 57760 (noting that Pavelif was not given an audience with the Secretary of State).
37. Gitman, *supra* note 3, at 47, 50.
38. *Notes de Mgr. Tardini*, June 13, 1942, Actes et Documents, vol. 4, page 547, no. 400.
39. George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (Cliff Street Books: New York, 1999) at 73.
40. It was thought by the Usatshi leadership that Serbs would be more accepting of the government if they were Roman Catholic.
41. *L'archevêque de Zagreb Stepinac au pape Pie XII*, December 3, 1941, Actes et Documents, vol. 8, page 368, no. 216.
42. Pius quoted this in his Papal Allocution of October 6, 1946.
43. Cardinal Jospi Bozaniç, *The Most Illustrious Figure of the Church in Croatia: Pastoral letter on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the Servant of God Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac*, March 1, 1998 (reprinted in *Cardinal Jospi Bozaniç, Blaženi Alojzije Stepinac*, Batina Koja Obvezuje (Glas Koncila, 2008)) at 300.
44. Alexander, *supra* note 17, at 106.
45. Zubrinic, *supra* note 16 (written by experts from Oxford and Cambridge in 1944, with the note “only for official use”).
46. Stilinovic, *supra* note 8.
47. Miroslav Akmadĳa, *The Position of the Catholic Church in Croatia 1945–1970*, Review of Croatian History 2/2006, no.1, 89, 97.
48. “Stepinac cried out against all injustice, especially against racism.” *Vatican Book Justifies Cardinal Stepinac: Example of Opposition to Fascism, Nazism and Communism*, Zenit News Agency, March 10, 1999 (quoting author Gianpaolo Mattei).
49. Akmadĳa, *supra* note 47, at 89.
50. Rev. M. Raymond, *The Man for this Moment: The Life and Death of Aloysius Stepinac* 191 (Staten Island: Alba House, 1971).
51. Pattee, *supra* note 12, at 470-80.
52. Akmadĳa, *supra* note 47, at 89. They also complained of 169 priests who were in prison and 89 who were listed as missing, as well as 19 seminary students, three monks, and four nuns who had been murdered *Id.* at 92.
53. Mark Riebling, *Was the Pope a Nazi*, <<<http://www.markriebing.com/nazipope.html>>> citing OSS Report, Jan. 29, 1946 (NA 226/174/116/883).

54. Akmadža, *supra* note 47, at 94.
55. Margareta Matijević, *Religious communities in Croatia from 1945 to 1991: Social causality of the dissent between Communist authorities and religious communities' leadership*, *Review of Croatian History* 2/2006, no.1, 117, 139.
56. *Id.* at 120.
57. Akmadža, *supra* note 47, at 96.
58. Prcela, *supra* note 12, at 53-54 (reprinting the charges).
59. *Archbishop Behind Bars*, *Time*, September 30, 1946.
60. Hinshaw, *supra* note 21, at 26 (quoting Braier); Zenit News Agency, March 10, 1999.
61. Barton, *supra* note 8.
62. Prcela, *supra* note 12, at 55.
63. Stilinovic, *supra* note 8.
64. Lackovic, *supra* note 17, at 3.
65. *Aide for the Archbishop*, *Time*, October 14, 1946.
66. Stilinovic, *supra* note 8.
67. *Time* reported: "This clearly included Marshal (Josip Broz) Tito and most of his Government," but it also noted that "few, if any, members of Tito's government regard themselves as Roman Catholics." *Excommunicate's Interview*, *Time*, October 21, 1946. As such, the excommunication actually meant nothing to the Tito government.
68. *Log of a Clerical Junket*, *Time*, August 25, 1947.
69. *Id.*
70. *Id.*
71. *Id.*
72. *Id.*
73. *How Are Things in Yugoslavia?*, *Time*, September 1, 1947.
74. *Deal Rejected*, *Time*, July 23, 1951.
75. *Dust in the Eyes*, *Time*, December 17, 1951.
76. Savor, *supra* note 22; Barton, *supra* note 8.
77. Traudl Lessing, *Stepinac Speaks*, *Catholic Digest* (April 1953) at 33.
78. *Encyclopedia of World Biography* (2004).
79. *The Silent Voice*, *Time*, February 22, 1960.
80. Modern testing suggests that he was slowly poisoned by his captors. See Bruce Johnston, *Pope to beatify archbishop murdered by Tito*, *The Daily Telegraph*, May 15, 1998, at 20.
81. *The Silent Voice*, *Time*, February 22, 1960.
82. *Assembly Condemns Communist Treatment of Cardinal Stepinac and Andrija Hebrang*, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, February 17, 1992. "The parliament specifically stated that the only reason for the cardinal's conviction was Stepinac's refusal to lead a schism." Stilinovic, *supra* note 8.

83. *Assembly Condemns Communist Treatment of Cardinal Stepinac and Andrija Hebrang*, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, February 17, 1992.
84. Savor, *supra* note 22.
85. Alexander, *supra* note 17, at 147.
86. Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkanski Babilon* 113 (Zagreb: Alinea, 2005).
87. Kristo, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, *supra* note 22, at 44.
88. Carlo Falconi, *The Silence of Pius XII* (1965; English translation, 1970).
89. John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking Press, 1999) at 47, 169, 173, 251, 254, 259, 262, 321, 352.
90. Kristo went on to explain: "Ronald J. Rychlak responded at length to Cornwell in *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*.... For understandable reasons, not even Rychlak knew that both Falconi and Cornwell based their judgments on the Catholic Church in Croatia and on Pope Pius XII on falsified documents from the Yugoslav secret police." Kristo, *The Catholic Church and the Jews*, *supra* note 22, at 44, note 150.
91. *Homily Of The Holy Father At Marija Bistrica, For The Beatification Of The Venerable Servant Of God, Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac*, October 3, 1998 <<[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/travels/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_03101998\\_croatia-beatification\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/travels/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_03101998_croatia-beatification_en.html)>>.
92. Savor, *supra* note 22.
93. Barton, *supra* note 8.