



Communist Disinformation: The Assault on a Pope and Catholic Leaders in Eastern Europe

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The Cold War was an intelligence war, waged by the Soviets with a powerful weapon called disinformation. Soviets used this weapon to strike against Western values, heroes, and institutions. They aggressively used it to spread atheism into the highly Catholic nations over which they had gained control in World War II. Catholic prelates, including Cardinals Wyszyński of Poland, Mindszenty of Hungary, and Stepinac of Croatia, were among the earliest targets. Eventually, even the wartime pontiff, Pius XII, was falsely portrayed. Whereas the false depictions, created for political reasons, do harm to truth, the Church, and mankind, faith in the Church's teachings has been a source of great strength for many who have been subjected to disinformation. In a world where Christianity is often under assault, those who can distinguish between truth and falsehoods told for political advantage must serve as beacons of light and reflections of the good that can come from pursuing the truth while remaining faithful to the Church.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union found itself on the same side as the Allies, despite the pre-war German-Soviet non-aggression pact, which included the division of Poland. The post-war alignment between the atheistic Soviet Union and the Christian West was never comfortable. For that reason, World War II moved quickly into the Cold War, which was a battle for the minds and souls of those on both sides of the East-West divide.

The Cold War was an intelligence war, waged by the Soviets with a powerful weapon called *disinformation*. Its task was to spread false information in such a way that it would be above doubt. In order to ensure the credibility of the lies, two things were required. First, the fabrications had to appear to come from respected and reputable *Western* sources, and second, there had to be “a kernel of truth” behind the allegations, so that at least some part of the story could be verified—and to ensure that the claim would not easily be dismissed. In addition, the originators had to do their best to ensure that the story got plenty of publicity, if necessary, by having agents or leftist sympathizers publish articles putting the desired spin on the alleged information.

I had the great honor of co-authoring a book on this topic with Ion M. Pacepa, the former head of Romanian Foreign Intelligence under the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. In 1978, Pacepa became the highest-ranking Soviet bloc official to defect to the West. His book *Red Horizons* became an enormous best-seller and played an important role in the ultimate overthrow of the Ceausescu regime and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Pacepa is a great instructor about disinformation, as he practiced it prior to his defection.

During the Cold War, more people in the Soviet bloc worked for the *disinformation* machinery than for the Soviet army and defense industry put together. The bloc's intelligence community had well over one million officers and several million informants around the world. All were involved in deceiving the West—and their own people—or in supporting this effort. One might also count the vast number of people working for the international organizations that the KGB secretly created. These organizations were headquartered outside the Soviet Union and pretended to be independent international entities, but they carried out the will of the Kremlin. That will included waging an all-out war on Christianity and the Catholic Church.

The end of World War II saw the Soviets with control over significant areas that had been strongholds of the Church. That created a problem for the atheistic communist government, and it struck back. Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński of Poland was one of the Kremlin's early victims.¹

Immediately after the war, Archbishop Wyszyński held out hope for the return of the Polish government-in-exile from London and the removal of Stalin's puppet regime. He actively supported anti-Communist movements, but the Soviets expended significant resources to maintain control over the Church. By 1950, Wyszyński saw no alternative but to reach a working agreement with the Communist authorities.

The agreement, signed on April 14, 1950, resolved the most important political disputes between the the Church and the government. It let the Church retain possession of many properties that had been subject to seizure and removed the Church from active politics, but it also prohibited religious teaching in public schools and gave governmental authorities a voice in the selection of bishops. (Interestingly, Karol Wojtyła—the future Pope John Paul II—was selected under this plan.)

Wyszyński's agreement with the government did not hold. He was arrested and imprisoned on September 25, 1953. Numerous other Polish priests were also arrested and accused of collaborating with "reactionary underground movements." By the beginning of 1954, there were nine Catholic bishops and several hundred priests in Polish prisons.²

This situation was repeated in many Soviet-controlled areas of Europe. Cardinals Mindszenty in Hungary and Stepinac in Croatia are two other well-known prelates who were first praised by the new communist regimes for their opposition to the Nazis, but then were prosecuted because the atheistic regime could not tolerate religious leaders speaking the truth.³

As he suppressed Church leaders, Stalin used disinformation to help reignite anti-Semitism in Western Europe by spreading thousands of copies of an old Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, across that part of the world. This was done secretly so that no one knew that the copies came from the Soviets. The idea was to portray the United States as a Zionist realm that was willing to use its military in order to transform the rest of the world into a Jewish fiefdom.⁴

Later, my co-author Pacea would directly be involved in circulating copies of the *Protocols* throughout the Middle East to foment anti-Semitism and cultivate terror attacks against Israel and the United States. Today, most people recognize that the *Protocols* are forgeries and the slander against Jews is false. Too many people, however, have succumbed to an equally false Soviet disinformation campaign, the one against Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church.

At the end of World War II, it was well known that Pius XII, the wartime leader of the Catholic Church, neither sympathized with the Nazis, nor was he indifferent. In Nazi circles throughout the war, it was “axiomatic” that Pius XII “sympathized with the Allies and covertly assisted their cause.”⁵ Only recently has his involvement with the plots inside of Germany to overthrow Hitler come to light,⁶ but in the post-war West, he “enjoyed near-universal acclaim for aiding European Jews through diplomatic initiatives, thinly veiled public pronouncements, and, very concretely, an unprecedented continent-wide network of sanctuary.”⁷

It was near the end of World War II, when the Communists began a concerted effort to depict Pius XII as being pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic. In February 1944, a Soviet Communist newspaper, *Izvestia*, charged that the Vatican had consistently supported Fascism. It also said that Pius “had supported the Nazi regime and had worked for the destruction of other states.” The *New York Times* reported the *Izvestia* charges, gave them no credence, and, in later pieces, expressed consternation that anyone could believe the charges as anything other than “Communist propaganda”⁸ So the campaign against Pius was put aside, and the Soviets instead focused on leading European prelates.

In 1946, Cardinal Mindszenty received the cardinal’s hat from Pope Pius XII in Rome, but Soviet troops were in control when he returned to Hungary. That fall, the local state security service arrested a group of

“conspirators” against the communist government. They were tried the following March. The leaders were condemned to death, the others to long prison terms. Mindszenty protested to the premier,⁹ and he continued to protest as Church schools were closed and religious orders were banned by the communist government. In retaliation, the government ordered school children and factory workers to demonstrate against him.¹⁰

Stalin wanted Mindszenty “neutralized”—not necessarily killed, because that would make international waves, but removed from the scene for life.¹¹ The Soviets’ tried and true method was to slander their enemies as having been pro-Nazi. The Hungarian prelate, however, was widely known as having used his Church to protect Jews, as having repeatedly denounced the Nazis, and as having been imprisoned by the Nazis’ Hungarian allies, the Arrow Cross. Some other plausible basis would have to be found to frame him.

On the night of December 26, 1948, a large police squadron noisily drove up to the palace. Colonel Décsi of the security police, followed by eight or ten of his men, burst into Mindszenty’s apartment, found him kneeling in prayer, and ordered him to come with them. When he asked to see a warrant for his arrest, one officer scoffed that they did not need one, bragging that they could find traitors, spies, and currency smugglers even when they wore a cardinal’s robes.

For the next thirty-nine days, Mindszenty was imprisoned and interrogated. The guards stripped him of his clothing and gave him only what he called a harlequin “clown suit” to wear. Every day the colonel questioned him and insisted he sign “confessions,” which he refused to do. Every night, a major would beat his naked body with a rubber truncheon until he collapsed. The guards urged him to eat, claiming they would order whatever he wanted from a restaurant. Knowing that prisoners were usually drugged, he at first refused all food, but then in his starved state he succumbed to consuming a little bread or clear broth. A team of three doctors examined him before every meal and left pills for him to take. He did not trust the doctors and tried to avoid taking the pills by crushing them and hiding the remnants. After two weeks, he grew weaker (and, as he later realized, probably did get blurry-minded from drugs present even in the clear broth), and he agreed to sign the minutes of his previous interrogations, although he was later sure he had never signed any “confession of guilt in the sense of an indictment.”¹²

From the beginning, Colonel Décsi told the cardinal exactly what confessions were required from him. The charges boiled down to Mindszenty’s allegedly treasonous contacts with the American Embassy in Budapest, and with Otto von Hapsburg in connection with a plot to stir up a Third World War. Supposedly, Mindszenty had orchestrated the theft of

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Hungary's crown jewels, and he planned to overthrow the communist government, draw up a cabinet for the future kingdom of Hungary, and then bring the ancient Crown of St. Stephen to Budapest in order to crown Otto von Hapsburg as king.¹³

On the evening of February 2, 1949, Mindszenty was escorted to the building of the Budapest People's Court. The next morning, he was given a haircut and made presentable. He put on a black suit and set out for the courtroom, accompanied by six other "conspirators." Eventually, charges were dropped against all but three of them.

The show-trial was conducted from February 3rd through the 8th. Mindszenty reportedly confessed to the crimes he was accused of, agreeing that he had written some letters that discussed overthrowing the government. In his book, he wrote that he was so physically and mentally exhausted that he scarcely knew what he was saying. All three defendants were found guilty. Mindszenty was sentenced to life imprisonment. Pope Pius XII condemned the jailing of the cardinal and excommunicated everyone involved in his trial and conviction.

Before the trial was even over, handwriting experts Lázlo and Hanna Sulner escaped to Austria and told their story to the press. They denounced the trial as a farce, displaying microfilms of fabricated documents they had produced in order to frame Mindszenty.¹⁴ They explained that they had been given copies of documents with instructions to "edit" them so that they appeared to have been written by Mindszenty.¹⁵

Shortly before the trial, the Sulners were asked to produce a confession by Mindszenty. They were also asked to forge other documents, signatures, and marginal notations for the case. When they did not work quickly enough for the authorities, they and their equipment were moved to police headquarters. A steady flow of documents resulted, some of which were produced by inexperienced police officers and resulted in what Mindszenty described as "outlandish form and spelling" in his confession.¹⁶

During the Hungarian uprising of 1956, Cardinal Mindszenty was set free, but his freedom lasted for only a short while. Soon the communists regained control of the government, and he was forced to seek asylum in the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, where he lived for the next 15 years. While there, he wrote his memoirs. Although they were not published until 1974, they were circulated as early as 1960. They provided devastating insight into the way the Communists slandered and framed him. That manuscript and the account given by the Sulners were significant embarrassments to the Kremlin.

The Soviets decided that for their next operation they would seek out someone who could not present a defense. Pope Pius XII had died in 1958,

and he was a natural target.¹⁷ The formula was simple: “to destroy an institution, it is first necessary to demolish the image of its strongest leaders.” The KGB decided to depict him as an anti-Semite and collaborator in Hitler’s Holocaust.¹⁸

Most people trace the charge that Pius was “silent” on the extermination of the Jews to a play, *The Deputy* (*Der Stellvertreter*),¹⁹ attributed to a German playwright named Rolf Hochhuth. In fact, Pius XII’s reputation flipped so fully and so fast without *any* new evidence being uncovered—indeed solely on the basis of activity or inactivity that had been fully known for almost two decades—that the disinformation should have been obvious.²⁰ This was not an organic result of honest inquiry.

The Deputy was a scathing indictment of the Pope’s alleged indifference to the Holocaust. Although it was fictional, Hochhuth claimed that it was based on “provable facts” and appended a text (“Sidelights on History”) in which he argued that his depiction was justified by the historical record.²¹ It was long known that *The Deputy* drew upon (or at least parroted) post-war Communist propaganda.²² Only recently, however, did Pacepa reveal that the KGB constructed, produced, and promoted the play in order to discredit Pius XII and through him the Catholic Church.²³ Consider:

1. Soviet leaders opposed the Church and took actions against it at other times in history.
 - a. The Soviet Union was actively engaged in disinformation campaigns in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
 - b. The Soviet Union was also in an active intellectual battle with the West and the Catholic Church at this time, and among its more common weapons were literature and theater.
 - c. *The Deputy* certainly drew upon Communist propaganda from the 1940s.
2. The German and American producers of the play, the American publisher, and the French translator, were all Communists.
 - a. The German producer staged plays under orders from the Communist Party.
 - b. The German theater at which *The Deputy* opened was overtly dedicated to pro-Communist propaganda.
 - c. The American producer was fined and given a suspended criminal sentence by the House Un-American Activities Committee due to his previous Communist ties.
 - d. The American publisher was an acknowledged Communist who specialized in radical books.

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- e. The French translator was a member of the Spanish Communist Party's politburo and had for several years organized clandestine activities for that organization.
 - f. The British translator and director both had close professional connections to Communist influences.
3. The play was promoted with Soviet-style propaganda.
- a. Many of the early positive reviewers had Communist ties.
 - i. At least one was paid by the KGB.
 - ii. Another was a former KGB spy.
 - iii. Others were at the time or had previously been members of the Communist Party.
 - b. The play would not have opened on Broadway but for support from a "Catholic" magazine that was falling under Communist influence at the time.
 - i. The magazine also set forth the Soviet line on the Vietnam War, the Kennedy Assassinations, the CIA's funding of student groups, and other issues.
 - ii. The CIA believed, but could not prove, that Soviet money funded that magazine.
4. Hochhuth was a likely tool for a KGB-style operation.
- a. He was an unknown writer; he had never published a play.
 - b. His research methods were sloppy at best (resulting in a significant legal verdict against him for his work on a different play).
 - c. He had been caught in outright lies.
 - d. After *The Deputy* was written, he worked closely with his life-long friend, David Irving, a noted Holocaust denier whom Hochhuth has frequently defended.²⁴

In 1969, British Intelligence, looking at Hochhuth's first two plays and a description of a third that he was working on at the time (with the working title *Anatomy of Revolution or How to Overthrow the U.S. Government from the Inside*), questioned his motives. A top secret report from Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson (with attached Memo by Intelligence Coordinator) said: "There are various grounds for suspecting, but no real proof, that Hochhuth's and [David] Irving's activities are part of a long-term Soviet 'disinformation' operation against the West."²⁵

Another declassified secret report said: "[I]t can also be argued . . . that Hochhuth is engaged in some 'decomposition' exercise and that he is attempting to destroy the fundamental value of a free society, from its religions to its heroes."²⁶ The report went on to speculate that Hochhuth

“might perhaps be an ‘intellectual agent, writing either on behalf of the East Germans or the Soviets.’”²⁷ It concluded: “[W]hether Hochhuth is motivated only by the urge to write historical plays, to rehabilitate the Germans or is up to some more sinister game is difficult to determine at this stage. But the Russians are certainly reaping some of the benefit.”²⁸

Once one realizes that *The Deputy* is a Soviet plot designed to discredit the Catholic Church, it becomes much easier to understand how a theatrical play could change the perception of Pius XII, from the “great benefactor of humanity,” to something far more sinister. Of course, the point of the play was not simply to discredit an already diseased pontiff. By associating a pope with the Nazis (as had been done with Cardinals Wyszyński and Stepinac), the Soviets could cast doubt upon Catholicism, Christianity, and the concept of religion itself.

The story of *The Deputy* focuses on two main characters, Kurt Gerstein (based on a real person) and Father Riccardo Fontana (a fictional Catholic priest).²⁹ Gerstein, a Nazi, tells Fontana what the Nazis are doing to the Jews. Fontana, however, is continually thwarted in his efforts to get a message to the Pope. When he finally succeeds, the Pope does not care. Fontana then sacrifices himself by putting on a yellow star and going to a concentration camp, thereby becoming the true “deputy of Christ.” Recurring themes include the idea that Hitler’s war against the Soviet Union was sort of a papal crusade, that Pius and the Jesuits were primarily concerned about their investments in the armaments factories, and papal silence.³⁰

Obviously, the alleged silence of any character cannot drive a theatrical production, so Pius is not on stage very long. His alleged silence, however, is the subject of much dialogue among the other characters. “Nearly all the other characters discuss among themselves, or at least mention, the Pope’s failure to speak out directly and forcefully against Hitler’s treatment of the Jews, thus leading up to a direct confrontation consisting of a single pivotal scene, the only one in which the Pope himself appears on stage (Act IV).”³¹ In some versions of the production, the Pope’s final act is to wash his hands, stained with ink from his editing of a statement that was never made, in a manner reminiscent of Pontius Pilate.³²

If it were produced as written, *The Deputy* would take about seven hours to perform.³³ Since that was totally unrealistic, the German producer, Erwin Piscator, edited the script into a more manageable length, making very substantial changes along the way.³⁴

The Deputy was more noted for its charges against the Pope than for its plot or theatric insight. Unfortunately, it became “the mouthpiece for an ideological interpretation of history that helped create the myth of a ‘silent’ Pius XII doing nothing in the face of Nazi slaughter.”³⁵

A number of war-time diplomats publicly rejected the play's characterization of Pius. In 1964, Pope Paul VI asked a team of three Jesuit historians, Pierre Blet, S.J., Burkhard Schneider, S.J., and Angelo Martini, S.J., to conduct research in closed Vatican archives and publish relevant documents from the war years.³⁶ A few years later, the three Jesuits were joined by a fourth, Robert A. Graham, S.J. The project was completed in 1981 with the publication of the 11th and final volume of the *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale*.³⁷

Publication of these documents seemed to quell the controversy. They clearly showed that the Vatican and the Catholic Church in general were involved in efforts to rescue Jewish and other victims from the Nazis. They also showed that Pope Pius XII was strongly anti-Nazi and that he was concerned about all of the victims.

Unfortunately, the issue was reignited in 1999, when British journalist John Cornwell revived the Soviet term “Hitler’s pope,” in his book of that name. Along with a lot of sloppy work, Soviet disinformation played a big role again. Specifically, fabricated evidence designed to frame Cardinal Stepinac as a pro-Nazi tainted Cornwell’s work on Pius XII.

In the 1960s, Italian writer Carlo Falconi wrote *The Silence of Pius XII*, a book based on documents provided to him by the Communist government of Croatia—including those used to frame Archbishop Stepinac. In his foreword, Falconi explained that the “central core of the Croatian documents” that had been provided to him by the Croatian (Communist) government “brought to light an entirely new and unsuspected harvest of revelations on the men and the mysterious world” of high Vatican officials. Falconi’s book impressed some reviewers because it was highly footnoted and relied upon documents that had been used in litigation—Cardinal Stepinac’s show trial.

We now know that Falconi was not looking at legitimate documents but at fabrications created by the Croatian Communist government. In 1985, Jakov Blažević, who prosecuted Stepinac, confessed that the documents on which the archbishop was tried were false.³⁸ Croatian scholar Jure Krišto has explained: “The documents . . . used had, of course, been assembled by the Yugoslav secret police, then led by the Serbian Communist [head of the UDBA] Aleksandar Ranković, and fed to Falconi in order to compromise Pope Pius XII as ‘Hitler’s Pope.’”³⁹

Despite this truth, which modern writers should know, *The Silence of Pius XII* remains much cited by critics of Pius XII. John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope*, published in 1999, praised Falconi’s “painstaking” research.⁴⁰ As such, the Soviet disinformation that tricked Falconi has tainted the entire investigation into Pope Pius XII.

If the Church was a target that the Communists were able to take advantage of, it was also a focal point of strength in the fight against Communism. In 1966, Cardinal Wyszyński oversaw the celebration of Poland's Millennium of Christianity, the one thousandth anniversary of the baptism of Poland's Prince Mieszko I. The Communist authorities refused to allow Pope Paul VI to visit Poland for that event. They also prevented Wyszyński from attending overseas celebrations. In the 1970s, however, Wyszyński gave his support to the growing Solidarity movement. Pope John Paul II was elected in 1978, and the Communist officials could not prevent *his* papal trip. That 1979 visit sparked a revolution that led to the eventual downfall of the Soviet bloc.

On that trip, John Paul closed his homily on the vigil of Pentecost with the words, "Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth, the face of this land!"⁴¹ Rather than directly taking on communism, he undermined its foundations by emphasizing the dignity of man and his work, human brotherhood, and man's ultimate destiny, which is more than temporal prosperity.

Cardinal Dziwisz explained that John Paul led "the largest revolution in history without the shedding of blood."⁴² After all, there was no way to confront Soviet power by force, so the pope did it with spiritual power, by convincing the people that there was a different way that they could live.

Today, Christians in the Middle East are being put to the sword, and many choose to be executed rather than deny their faith.⁴³ That is, of course, admirable and tragic at the same time. People who lived under the Soviet umbrella faced perhaps a less dramatic choice, but they faced a tool of persuasion almost as difficult to resist, disinformation.

In too many Western areas, disinformation caused people to lose faith in their government, in their churches, and even in their basic values. That was the aim of the Soviets, and it had a huge impact on most of Europe. In much of Eastern Europe, however, the Church held. The faith was not undone, and a Polish pope helped bring down the Iron Curtain.

In his 1994 apostolic letter *Terrio Millennio Adveniente*, John Paul wrote: "With the fall of the great anti-Christian systems in Europe, first of Nazism and then of Communism, there is an urgent need to bring once more the liberating message of the Gospel to the men and women of Europe."⁴⁴ Catholics in Eastern Europe have found great strength in the Church. They have used that strength to help preserve Europe's Christian identity and to begin re-evangelizing the continent. In a world where Christianity is often under assault, these people have made their nations into beacons of light and reflections of the good that can come from pursuing the truth while remaining faithful to the Church.

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Notes

1. See Stefan Wyszyński, *The Culture of Bolshevism and the Polish Intellectuals*, in *Polish Perspectives on Communism* (Lexington Books, Bogdan Szlachta, ed. 2000).

2. On the relationship between the Polish government, the Vatican, and the Church in Poland, see *ibid.* at 20, 28 (noting that Pope Pius XII was responsible for some of the tension between the Communist government and the Holy See).

3. See Ronald J. Rychlak, *Cardinal Stepinac and the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia During the Second World War* (published in English and Croatian) in *Stepinac: A Witness to the Truth* (Željko Tanjić, 2009); József Cardinal Mindszenty, *Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1974).

4. Ion Mihai Pacepa & Ronald J. Rychlak, *Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism*, 96–97 (WND Books, 2013).

5. Alvarez, David & Graham, Robert A. *Nothing Sacred: Nazi Espionage against the Vatican 1939–1945* (Frank Cass: London, 1997) at xi. “The Nazis considered the Catholic Church in general and the Vatican in particular to be their arch-enemies beyond any hope of accommodation, let alone collaboration.” *Id.* at xii.

6. Mark Reibling, *Church of Spies: The Pope’s Secret War Against Hitler* (Basic Books, 2015).

7. Kevin Doyle, *Robert Graham, S.J.*, *First Things*, June/July 1997 at 16.

8. Stephen M. DiGiovanni, *Pius XII and the Jews: The War Years as Reported by the N.Y. Times*, 6 *The Catholic Social Science Review*, 366 (2000).

9. Pacepa and Rychlak, *supra* note 4, at 81.

10. Mindszenty, *supra* note 3, at 83–84.

11. Pacepa and Rychlak, *supra* note 4, at 83.

12. *Ibid.* at 84–85.

13. *Ibid.* at 85–86.

14. Robert McG. Thomas Jr., *Hanna F. Sulner, 81, Expert Drawn Into Mindszenty Plot*, *The New York Times*, January 19, 1999.

15. A typist in the cardinal’s secretariat had been intimidated into providing the original papers to the police. Mindszenty, *supra* note 3, at 87.

16. *Ibid.*, at 114–117.

17. “The only noteworthy comment on Pius’s silence during the Holocaust that was made at the time of his death came from a writer for the French Communist newspaper *L’Humanité*.” Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* 316, n.77 (Houghton Mifflin, 1999); *Dulles to Attend Rites for Pontiff*, *New York Times*, October 11, 1958 at 2 (same).

Among the very many tributes to Pope Pius XII printed or mentioned by the Times, there was only one negative, coming from Paris. The Communist official organ *L’Humanité* accused the late Pope of allowing his doctrinal condemnation of Marxist atheism “to be transformed into an arm of antiSoviet policy in Europe and the world.” While the Pope had spoken out against the arms race, the Communist paper contended,

criticism should be made against the Pope “for not having taken a stand against the Nazi concentration camps during the War.” . . . The origin of the false accusation that Pope Pius XII had been silent concerning the Holocaust, was Soviet Russia. It was propaganda for Communist ends.

DiGiovanni at 30 (noting that the Communist charge of papal silence was false). On February 2, 1944, the *New York Times* reported that the Soviet newspaper was setting forth false propaganda that Pius XII “had supported the Nazi Regime and had worked for the destruction of other states.” The *Times* expressed consternation that anyone could believe the charges as anything other than Communist propaganda. *Id.* On February 4, 1944, the *Times* editorialized that the United States and Great Britain

have no doubt where the real sympathy of the Vatican lies in this struggle. They recognize the inescapable neutrality of the Pope’s position; but they have had no difficulty in finding in his eloquent declarations clear evidence of his detestation for those who have violated the rights of the little nations who have committed bestial acts from one end of Europe to the other and who have attempted to elevate the dogma of Totalitarianism to the dignity of a new religion. [The Soviet] attack is damaging to the unity on which victory depends.

Id. Pro-Communist agitators took their lead from the Soviet press and produced a whole body of anti-papal literature. See, e.g., Joseph McCabe, *The Pope Helps Hitler to World-Power: How the Cross Courted the Swastika for Eight Years* (Haldemon-Julius: Girard, Kansas, 1941); H. G. Wells, *Crux Ansata: An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church*, (Agora: New York, 1944); Avro Manhattan, *The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century* (Watts: London, 1947); Edmond Paris, *Le Vatican Contre L’Europe* (Editions Fischbacher: Paris, 1959).

18. The Catholic Church was very active in its opposition to Communism at this time, and it also used literature to make its point. “Catholic periodicals and newspapers were unanimous in the anti-Communist crusade.” Hennessey at 290; see Patrick N. Allitt, *Catholic Anti-Communism*, Crisis Magazine Online, <http://insidecatholic.com/Joomla/> (April 4, 2009) (“it was in the twenty years of the ‘high’ Cold War era, 1945–1965, that Catholic anti-Communism reached its climax”). One of the most interesting projects was a comic book used for instruction in Catholic schools. It was entitled *Treasure Chest*, and in 1961, Communism was regularly featured. The teacher’s edition of the September 28, 1961 issue began with an essay entitled *Why Teach Communism in the Elementary School?* by Mother A. Murphy, R.S.C.A. That issue was entitled *Communism: Threat to Liberty*, and it included a letter of support from J. Edgar Hoover. The story line, entitled *This Godless Communism*, provided a historical look at Communism. Among the references that Soviet leader Khrushchev might not have liked were several unflattering images of him, accusations that he “is a vicious man,” a notation that he sent thousands to their death (with a picture of him thinking: “What I have done is for the Communist Party. Therefore it is good”), reference to his

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role in the execution of 400,000 Ukrainians, a depiction of him giving the order in 1956 to send tanks into Hungary (with him saying “I want them crushed. Send in tanks and guns and planes until they are smashed”) and a reference to his “ruthless disregard for life and God-given rights of people.” The story also referenced Communism’s refusal to acknowledge God (with Khrushchev depicted as saying: “There is no place in Communism for this nonsense you call God. And when Communism controls the world, the people will no longer be allowed to recognize God in any way”), the imprisonment of Cardinal Mindszenty, Soviet cells in the United States, the role of Soviet agents in creating riots, a priest explaining to children that “Communism is the work of the devil,” and instructions about how children should separate the people of that nation from the Soviet government (“We should remember that the Russians are our brothers in Christ. We should hate Communism . . . but not the Russian people who are victims of it.”).

19. This appears in the still unreleased Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Positio*, appendix 25 at 236.

20. “Most amusing are anti-Catholic authors Avro Manhattan and Paul Blanchard. They both published books in 1949 accusing the pope of pro-Nazi sympathies. But neither author mentioned his ‘silence’ during the Holocaust. Of course, after ‘The Deputy’ came out, both of them suddenly remembered that he was silent as well.” Email note to the author from Dimitri Cavalli, June 2, 2009.

21. J. R. C. Wright, *Pius XII and the Nazi Challenge*, History of the 20th Century, BPC Publishing, Ltd. 1969, at 1929.

22. See Lapomarda at 172, 195, n.8; Giovanni Sale, *The birth of the “black legend” of Pius XII*, La Civiltà Cattolica, March 21, 2009.

23. For some people, at least, the play did indeed discredit not only the Catholic Church, but Christianity itself. Consider the following passage:

I began attending the Unitarian Church, where I felt at home in the liberal intellectual ambience. In those days of desegregation and social change, it was good to feel a part of throwing off the old order. One of the sermons I recall most vividly cited Rolf Hochhuth’s play, *The Deputy*, which I now know is the fictional source for much of the disinformation about Pope Pius XII’s role in World War II. The sermon fed my sense of outrage and probably contributed to my mistrust of institutional Christianity. I still considered myself a Christian, but not in the sense taught in churches; I felt I would have to invent my own religion to feel completely satisfied, and I even made some notes as to its projected beliefs and practices.

Terrye Newkirk, *The Long and Winding Road*, This Rock Sept, 1996 <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1996/9609conv.asp>.

24. See Ronald J. Rychlak, *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* (rev. ed., 2010) (chapter 16). Irving raised his profile as a Holocaust denier in 2000, when he sued Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University and Penguin Books over Lipstadt’s book *Denying the Holocaust*. Irving complained that the book accused him of being “a Nazi apologist and an admirer of Hitler, who has resorted to the distortion of facts

and to the manipulation of documents in support of his contention that the Holocaust did not take place.” At trial, Irving invoked his correspondence with Hochhuth (who called to lend moral support) as evidence of his broadmindedness. The defense, however, rested on the “truth of the matter asserted.” After the judge sided with the defendants, the *New York Times* proclaimed: “The verdict puts an end to the pretense that Mr. Irving is anything but a self-promoting apologist for Hitler.”

Hochhuth defended Irving as he faced similar charges. In a newspaper interview, he called Irving “an honorable man,” a “fabulous pioneer of contemporary history,” and “much more serious than many German historians.” He said descriptions of Irving as a Holocaust-denier were “idiotic.” This caused German newspapers and Jewish groups to label Hochhuth an anti-Semite. In fact, the German publishing house Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt cancelled publication of Hochhuth’s autobiography over this matter. For a detailed discussion of these matters, see Pacepa and Rychlak, *supra* note 4, at 163–173.

25. Quoted in David Irving, *Churchill’s War* (rev. ed., 2007), appendix III, p. 851, note 55.

26. Declassified Secret Memorandum: *Soldiers*, to Mr. John Peck & Sir E. Peck from J.E. Jackson, January 10, 1969, reprinted in Rychlak, *supra* note 25.

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* (concluding that the “best counter action [to the charges implicating Churchill] would seem the release of the full range of the courts of enquiry”).

29. As a prisoner of the Allies after the war, the real Gerstein (a Nazi official) set forth a written statement on which the broad outline of the play was based. It may have been true, but Gerstein was hanged in his cell (perhaps suicide) before his story could be confirmed. As such, he remains an enigmatic figure. See Pierre Joffroy, *A Spy for God: The Ordeal of Kurt Gerstein* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1969, N. Denny trans.).

Fontana is fictional, though Hochhuth at times said that the character was based upon Fr. Maxamilion Kolbe, Fr. Bernhard Lichtenberg, and similar self-sacrificing priests. Hochhuth dedicated the play to the memory of Kolbe and Lichtenberg, two priests who were killed for standing up against the Nazis. While this can be seen as a sign of respect for the Catholic Church, it is more likely a statement of contrast, designed to advance Hochhuth’s criticism of Pius XII.

30. Desmond Fisher, *Pope Pius XII and the Jews: An Answer to Hochhuth’s Play Der Stellvertreter (The Deputy)* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965), at 9, 29. According to the Hochhuth, *The Deputy* has no imputation of anti-Semitism, because there was no evidence that Pius was an anti-Semite. Hochhuth at 331. Patricia Marx, *Interview with Rolf Hochhuth*, WNYC Radio (February 1964), reprinted in *The Storm over the Deputy* (Grove Press: New York, Eric Bentley, ed., 1964) at 52, 59–60.

31. Margaret E. Ward, *Rolf Hochhuth* (Twayne Publishers: Boston, 1977) at 29.

32. See *Ibid.* at 34.

33. *Ibid.* at 27. Hochhuth called for individual actors to play different parts in different scenes.

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34. “Piscator’s production . . . reduced the fifth act to a short epilogue, making Riccardo’s development into a tragic hero unclear. . . . It shifted the emphasis back to the confrontation with the Pope in Act IV and away from the question posed at the beginning of the final act: ‘Where Are You God?’” *Ibid.* at 29 (noting that many other productions deleted the fifth act entirely). It also eliminated one of Hochhuth’s most offensive passages, when Pius first appears and says: “With burning sorrow for Our factories.” See Fisher, *supra* note 31, at 7.

35. Robert P. Lockwood, *Deconstructing “The Deputy,”* Catalyst, June 2000. The depiction of the Pope as an unprincipled politician so shaped the perception of him that it has become an “unshakable axiom of popular mythology that Pope Pius XII was, if not actually a crypto-Nazi, at least guilty of criminal cowardice and insensitivity in the face of the Holocaust.” Graham, *Pope Pius XII and the Jews of Hungary in 1944* at 1.

36. Congregation for the Causes of Saints, *Positio*, Statement of the relator, p. 9. Like most world governments, the Holy See keeps records confidential for an extended period of time to make certain that secret governmental information will not be revealed and that living people will not be embarrassed by disclosure of private information. Only recently were most (not all) of the American OSS World War II files made public, and similar French and British files also remain secret.

37. Volume three is split into two books, which accounts for occasional references to 12 volumes.

38. Dennis Barton, *Croatia 1941–1946* (The Church in History Information Centre 2006).

39. Jure Krišto *The Catholic Church and the Jews in the Independent State of Croatia*, Review of Croatian History, 3/2007, no.1, 13, 16. He 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.” *Ibid.* at 44, note 150.

40. John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope* (1999) at 47, 169, 173, 251, 254, 259, 262, 321, 352.

41. Apostolic Journey to Poland, Holy Mass, *Homily Of His Holiness John Paul II*, Victory Square, Warsaw, 2 June 1979. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790602_polonia-varsovia.html.

42. Tomasz Adamski, *A Revolution of Conscience*, Columbia Magazine Online, July 1, 2017 <http://www.kofc.org/en/columbia/detail/revolution-of-conscience.html>.

43. See *The Persecution and Genocide of Christians in the Middle East: Prevention, Prohibition, & Prosecution*, Angelico Press (2017) (Rychlak and Adolphe, eds.).

44. Today, Poland remains a stronghold of Christianity in Europe. About half of all Christian Poles, most of them Catholic, are regular churchgoers. Poland is also Europe’s main exporter of Catholic priests.