

HITLER DIDN'T HAVE A POPE – BUT HE DID HAVE A MUFTI

A Review of Rabbi David G. Dalin's "The Myth of Hitler's Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews From The Nazis" by Don Feder

Long before the child-abuse scandal, liberals were abusing the Catholic Church by portraying Pope Pius XII as a Nazi stooge. Based on a steady drumbeat of propaganda, starting with the 1963 play "The Deputy," some suspected that the wartime pope was wearing an SS uniform under his pontifical robes.

When I started college in 1965, "The Deputy" was required reading for incoming freshman. The liberal establishment – which had long loathed the Catholic Church for its positions on sexual morality – embraced this toxic fiction as revealed truth.

The mythology of Der Pope was elaborated on in a series of books, including "Hitler's Pope" by John Cornwell. Pius XII is variously indicted as indifferent to the fate of European Jewry, avaricious and a cold-hearted conniver who viewed the Nazis as a means to counter Soviet communism.

In the past, the most vigorous defenders of the pontiff, who died in 1958, were orthodox Catholic writers. Now comes David Dalin – scholar, professor of history and political science and a Conservative rabbi – with a most welcome work: **"The Myth of Hitler's Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews From The Nazis."**

As Rabbi Dalin points out, at a time when Allied leaders cared little about the death camps (with the honorable exception of Churchill), the Catholic Church rescued more Jews than any other institution in Europe.

Yes, the pope's detractors admit, but this was the work of individual priests, nuns and bishops, not the Vatican.

Wrong, says Rabbi Dalin, who marshals impressive evidence that Pius XII was among the most righteous of gentiles, to wit:

- Starting in the autumn of 1943, Pius ordered Italian churches and convents to hide Jews.
- In Rome alone, 155 monasteries and convents sheltered more than 5,000.
- Roughly 3,000 Jews found refuge in Castel Gandolfo, the pontiff's summer residence.
- Hundreds of Jews were housed within the walls of the Vatican.
- Monsignor John Patrick Carroll-Abbing, a rescuer, founder of Italy's Boy's Town and a close confidant of Pius XII, testified in his memoirs that all of this was done at the direction of a pope who's now derided as a closet anti-Semite. Dalin writes: "He (*Carroll-Abbing*) stressed that the idea that he and others like him acted in spite of the pope's silence 'is a blatant lie! I spoke to Pope Pius XII many times during the war, in person, face to face, and he told me not once but many times to assist the Jews. ... I can personally testify that the pope gave me direct face-to-face verbal orders to rescue Jews.'"
- The eminent historian Martin Gilbert (author of "The Holocaust: A History of The Jews of Europe During The Second World War") agrees. In a 1998 interview, Gilbert observed, "Hundreds of thousands of Jews (*were saved*) by the Catholic Church, under the leadership and with the support of Pope Pius XII."

Equally false is the notion that the pope never directly criticized Nazism. Dalin demonstrates that the much-maligned pontiff spoke out often against the Nazi ideology, and as early the 1920s, when -- as Cardinal Pacelli -- he was papal nuncio to Germany.

On the eve of World War II, in his first papal encyclical ("Summi Pontificatus"), Pius decried Nazism and anti-Semitism. The encyclical was hailed by a New York Times' headline "Pope Condemns Dictators, Treaty Violators, Racism."

Heinrich Mueller, head of the Gestapo, complained that "Summi Pontificatus" "is directed exclusively against Germany." The Allies thought so too. Dalin writes, "Allied aircraft dropped 88,000 copies of

the encyclical over parts of Germany in an effort to raise anti-Nazi sentiment.”

In light of the foregoing, why has the myth persisted the Pius XII was a closet fascist?

Is it a communist conspiracy to undermine the Catholic Church? Although the first salvo was fired by Rolf Hochhuth (the German leftist who wrote “The Deputy,” and – ironically – was a former member of The Hitler Youth), attacks on Pius in fact have become a tactic in the intra-Church struggle.

Liberal Catholics – like Cornwell and authors James Carroll and Garry Wills – have done more than anyone else to keep lie alive.

The pope’s supposed indifference to the Holocaust is offered as proof that the Church is hopelessly antiquated – a reactionary institution, mired in Medieval prejudice, that cares more for accumulating wealth and maintaining rigid control of the faithful, than in fighting evil and succoring society’s victims.

As Dalin notes, it takes a particular callousness to distort the history of the Holocaust to score political points. In effect, the Catholic left is using the deaths of six million Jews to advance a theological agenda.

How else explain this relentless assault on Pius XII, when little has been written about the role of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, then the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, in aiding and abetting the Holocaust?

A precursor to al-Qaeda and Hamas, al-Husseini devoted his life and considerable polemical skills to fomenting the most rabid Jew hatred.

Dalin (who devotes a chapter in his book to Islamic anti-Semitism) reports that al-Husseini took up residence in Berlin early in the war, as an honored guest of Hitler. The mufti made propaganda broadcasts to the Arab world calling for the extermination of Jews (“Kill the Jews, wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion,” al-Husseini implored in one radio address) and recruited a Waffen SS company among Bosnian Muslims.

After the war, Dieter Wisliceny (one of Eichmann's lieutenants) testified that the mufti even visited Auschwitz, and urged guards in charge of the gas chambers to "work more diligently."

Regrettably, this monster escaped prosecution as a war criminal (a case of Allied pandering to the Arabs). In the late 1940s, he met a young Yasser Arafat in Cairo, and the torch was passed to the next generation of Jihadist anti-Semites. (Arafat called the mufti, "our hero al-Husseini.") Dalin sees a direct connection between al-Husseini's murderous ideology and today's Islamic anti-Semitism and terrorism.

Why has the mufti received so little notice from the liberal historians and commentators who are so quick to condemn the wartime pope? Perhaps because, while it's fashionable in elitist circles to bash the Catholic Church, criticism of Islam is considered in bad taste. Since Muslims are often anti-Western, the left is willing to bend over backwards to keep from offending them.

While Hitler didn't have a pope, he did have a mufti. After reading Rabbi Dalin's extraordinary book, one is compelled to say of Pius XII: Bless you, father. You didn't sin.

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