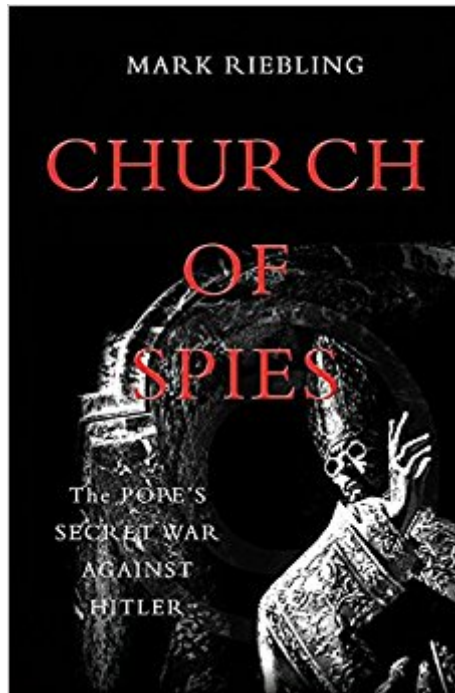




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Church Of Spies: The Pope's Secret War Against Hitler



Synopsis

Vatican silence on Nazi crimes is fiercely debated. History has accused wartime pontiff Pius the Twelfth of complicity in the Holocaust and dubbed him "Hitler's Pope." But a key part of the story has remained untold. Pius ran the world's largest church, smallest state, and oldest spy service. Sainly but secretive, he skimmed from church charities to pay covert couriers, and surreptitiously tape-recorded his meetings with top Nazis. When he learned of the Holocaust, Pius played his cards close to his chest. He sent birthday cards to Hitler--while plotting to overthrow him. Church of Spies documents this cross-and-dagger intrigue in shocking detail. Gun-toting Jesuits stole blueprints to Hitler's homes. A Catholic book publisher flew a sports plane over the Alps with secrets filched from the head of Hitler's bodyguard. The keeper of the Vatican crypt ran a spy ring that betrayed German war plans and wounded Hitler in a briefcase bombing. The plotters made history in ways they hardly expected. They inspired European unification, forged a U.S.-Vatican alliance that spanned the Cold War, and challenged Church teachings on Jews. Yet Pius's secret war muted his public response to Nazi crimes. Fearing that overt protest would impede his covert actions, he never spoke the "fiery words" he wanted. Told with heart-pounding suspense, based on secret transcripts and unsealed files, Church of Spies throws open the Vatican's doors to reveal some of the most astonishing events in the history of the papacy. "[E]xciting.... deals fairly with the pope's theological and political rationale.... thoroughly documented with primary sources... Church of Spies is the best account of the subject to date. Amen!" - CIA Studies in Intelligence (Unclassified Edition)

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Customer Reviews

Wall Street Journal "[A] page-turning book...fascinating." Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*
"A fascinating contribution to the literature on the Holocaust, the history of the papacy, and the life of Pius XII. ... I feel that we should all apologize to Pius XII for our past slanders!" *The Jewish Week*
"Riebling, in thorough research and documentation, shows that Pius XII, rather than being an acquiescent enabler of the Nazis' genocidal designs, was an active participant in an intrigue whose goal was the assassination of the Fuhrer." Sir Martin Gilbert, official biographer of Winston Churchill
"Without minimizing the complicity of individual Christians, or the role of Christian anti-Semitism, Mark Riebling shows that the Vatican took a very powerful stance against the Nazis. It is especially important for Jewish people--and I am Jewish myself--that this information is now being gathered for all to see." *National Review*
"Groundbreaking... Writing with the craft of a novelist and the conscience of a meticulous scholar, Riebling has produced a masterly account." Eric Metaxas, author of *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Prophet, Martyr, Spy*
"Church of Spies shows, with significant research to back it up, that Pope Pius the Twelfth was not, in fact, Hitler's Pope, as he has wrongly been called, but quite the contrary, an enemy of Hitler's who worked behind the scenes against him. Mark Riebling documents how people of faith linked arms against evil that was Nazism and did not turn a blind eye against it. This is a fascinating, riveting, and a deeply important corrective to the false narrative about the Catholic church during World War II." *Washington Times*
"[A] remarkable book.... Highly readable.... [Riebling] has written what is one of the more important books on intelligence of the year. His painstaking research and vivid writing make it a five-cloak/five-dagger read." Gerald Posner, author of *God's Bankers: A History of Money and Power at the Vatican*
"Mark Riebling takes readers into the seldom-explored mysterious world of Vatican espionage with a deeply researched and fresh account that reads like a spy thriller. The crackling narrative of Church of Spies delivers an important and compelling addition to the debate over the legacy of Pius XII, the most powerful and complex Pope of modern times." *Kirkus*
"Riebling, an expert on secret intelligence, compellingly explores the papacy's involvement in espionage during World War II.... This book has much to surprise, especially the many German officers, separately and together, involved in attempts on Hitler's life.... Pius, vilified by critics who believed he ignored Germany's atrocities, comes off as a politically savvy man who realized his interference would precipitate Hitler's mortal overreaction against German Catholics. Not only a dramatic disclosure of the Vatican's covert actions, but also an absorbing, polished story for all readers of World War II

history." Library Journal "Clandestine organizations are hard to reconstruct and Riebling has mined an impressive array of archival sources to tell this fascinating story." Military History "[A] revealing history of Pius' wartime dealings with the German resistance to Nazi rule.... Readers will be surprised at the steady stream of anti-Hitler conspiracies, several of which reached the point where dates were set and bombs assembled." Sister Anne Flanagan,Â Nun Blog.com "I couldn't put the book down.... ReadingÂ Church of SpiesÂ was like encountering heroes of indescribable stature and being challenged by their convictions--and their willingness to suffer and die (as many of them did) for truth and justice."Â Tomas Borges,Â Ruiz-Healy TimesÂ (Mexico City) "The author explains with great wisdom and after an arduous investigation how the Catholic Church to safeguards its interests through the world's oldest espionage system. He demolishes the the myth that Pope Pius XII(Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli) was Hitler's Pope. ... The book reads a thrillingly as a spy novel. As a former intelligence officer I give it my highest recommendation!" Happy Catholic.com "[A]n action-packed story.... from the beginning where the pope has the Papal Library wired with the best surveillance technology of the time to the end where we see conspirators stage a daring prison break in the Alps.In between, there were Jesuits with guns, double agents, incriminating notes swallowed, escapes across roof tops, notes passed through prison laundries, and much more. ... Church of Spies is a story that resonates in our own time as well as providing us with heroes for WWII."Â La Stampa (Rome) "Church of Spies reconstructs in detail the long-secret operations of priestly 007s against the [Nazi] tyrant... Riebling stresses that his findings do not exonerate the Pope for failing to speak out on the Shoah - a duty he had, 'not only as a pope, but as a person.' Yet after decades of heated debate, the revelation of this espionage network is of major importance."Â Different Bugle "[A] page-turner.... riveting." Rome Reports "[A] moral adventure story ...Â Church of SpiesÂ tells a story that is very relevant to the problems we face today, where the main characters are real people who have to face reality with a sense of courage under extraordinary circumstances." Inside the Vatican "[F]ascinating, authoritative... Mark Riebling's book lays to rest forever the accusation that Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) was "Hitler's Pope." Il Populista (Rome) "Mark Riebling throws an unusual light on the relations between Church and Nazism, disproving the rumor for over half a century that the Holy See, before and during the Second World War, was colluding with or at least submissive towards Nazism. Now, thanks to Riebling's research, we see almost a James Bond kind of Pope who intrigued to overthrow Hitler. He failed, but he tried."Â Catholic Book Club"Grabbed my attention from the outset. ... It's all very dark and dramatic! ...feeling like a fly on the wall in the Vatican... very moving. ... some tears. ... But it's certainly compelling. ... Loved!"Â Catholic Book Reviews "[T]hough the efforts to assassinate

Hitler failed (the reasons for the lack of success form the backbone of this suspenseful narrative), Pope Pius XII clearly took steps to attack Nazism from its very top....[A] compelling picture of the Pope's heretofore unknown actions in attempting to covertly bring down the Nazis." Army RumorService (UK) "...a well researched fascinating story that explains how some of the myths of Pius's pro Nazi views entered circulation. ... backed up by a remarkable 99 pages of notes and source references. ... The detail is invaluable for further research and writing but also makes a good read of a fascinating tale." David Conway,Â Law and Liberty"Immensely well informed and hugely engrossing." George Weigel,Â First Things"[Church of Spies] adds a mass of new evidence to what we know, now, about what the Pope and the Church did to deal with the mortal threat to civilization posed by Hitler and German National Socialism."Catholic World Report"[A] blockbuster of a book which not only defends Pius XII...but utterly demolishes the Black Legend by showing in intricate and meticulously documented detail...that from the very start of the war the Pope cooperated secretly with anti-Nazi forces in Hitler's thousand year Reich who sought, first, to remove the Führer from power; and when that failed, to kill him.... Riebling's book is beautifully written, and reads like a novel.... [R]iveting."Catholic Herald (UK)"Mark Riebling'sÂ Church of SpiesÂ is an exciting Vatican thriller.... a lively and engrossing work... the author has certainly done his homework.... the book is an exciting and suspenseful read, full of real heroes...."Choice"Steeped in primary sources and compulsively readable, this book should lead to a broad rethinking of Pius XII's action and inaction during the Nazi era.... Though never exonerating Pius for his few oblique statements about Nazi murderous anti-Jewish policy, Riebling portrays Pius as an implacable foe of Nazism and sheds light on the extent of Catholic resistance to an inhuman regime."Joseph Bottum,Â Washington Free Beacon"Riebling recounts in a fast, readable style the fumbblings, betrayals, and bad luck that plagued attempts to remove Hitler. Through it all, he shows the Vatican looming in the background - the only support on which the conspirators could count, the only consistent contact they had with the Allies, and one of the few moral centers to which they could look."H-Net"Church of Spies sheds light on the secret actions and covert war waged by Pius, the Vatican, the German Catholic Church, and various German Catholic citizens against Hitler and the Nazis.... By weaving together numerous storylines in a chronological fashion from 1939 to 1945, the history of this period reads more like an exciting popular fiction spy novel than an academic work.... [A]n extremely readable and interesting work."The American Catholic"[T]he wealth of detail the author has unearthed by his meticulous research...is impressive and absolutely damning against those who mendaciously have attacked Pius XII as either the silent Pope or even a sub rosa ally of Hitler. This book is highly recommended."Former CIA Officer Dr. Mark Stout,Â War on the

Rocks"After years of painstaking research in the Vatican's archives, Riebling has a different and heart-pounding story to tell of the Pope's network of spies that fought to bring about Hitler's downfall.... [An] amazing book that combines the rigor of history with the storytelling of a novel."Australian Financial Review"Moves as swiftly as a novel."Newcastle Herald"Meticulously researched.... A fascinating account of the many Catholics, including priests, who were part of the intelligence network that actively fought the Nazi regime."Aletia"Church of Spies is well worth reading for the fascinating story."George Weigel,Â First ThingsÂ blog"[A] deeply researched study of Pius XII's involvement in plots to depose Adolf Hitler.... It's a great read, so give it on those grounds; but it's morally permissible if you give it to annoy the New York Times." Kevin Doyle, America "Crackles with suspense... serves up surprises... This book inspires and cautions. ... If World War II, the modern papacy or the 'Pius War' interests you at all, get this book." L' Altra Pagina (Rome) "Monumental. ... Extremely well researched and documented, and told with verve and suspense worthy of the best spy novels. ... Mark Riebling has probably forever changed the historical perspective on Pius XII." Intelligencer: Journal of U. S. Intelligence Studies "[A] remarkable book... Mark Riebling gained access to Vatican documents not viewed by any previous author. Â The scope of Riebling's book is demonstrated by 104 pages of chapter notes (which are worth the read on their own). Â ... Â Incredibly brave men [are] highlighted in Riebling's highly readable narrative. ... Riebling by no means exonerates Pius. Â But he takes a giant stride in refurbishing the status of Pius." Mark Ruff, Contemporary Church History Quarterly "Mark Riebling's methodically-researched detective story... deserves widespread attention masterful... will long remain the definitive account of the papal involvement in the conspiracies to topple Hitler. ... This is simply the finest work on the subject in print." Breitbart News "[F]ascinating...offers a compelling narrative of the actions taken by Pope Pius to stop Hitler from carrying out his campaign of world domination and ethnic cleansing. Backed by a mass of carefully compiled documentation, Riebling shows that Pius cooperated in a variety of plots, initiated by patriotic, anti-Nazi Germans, to assassinate Hitler and replace the National Socialist regime with a government that would make peace with the west." Crisis Magazine"In compelling detail, Riebling looks not only at the strategies that various anti-Nazi officers and other co-conspirators pursued to kill Hitler, but the kind of government structures that would need to be imposed on shattered Germany if the conspiratorial plots succeeded.... Riebling's compelling new evidence should put to rest the propaganda charging that Pius XII was at best a weak reed and at worst a Nazi sympathizer." John Davis, Decatur Daily"Some books are important to read... to understand how we got where we are in the world... We live in a particularly rich time of new awareness of WorldWar II history [and] Mark Riebling, well

connected intelligence expert... offers a stellar new contribution. Pius's noble motives for his now revealed actions alone make this book of signal interest, yet there is so much more to Riebling's work. Riebling discusses not only the espionage communication trade craft involved, which is superb, but also the moral dilemmas faced by the conspirators." Francis Phillips, *Â Mercator.net*"... a first-class spy thriller, dealing not with fiction but with historical facts.... Even though one reads this book with retrospective knowledge of the outcome... such is Riebling's skill as a story-teller that he keeps up the suspense until the end." *Mysteries and More* "A grand spy thriller that happens to be a work of non-fiction." George Weigel, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center "This gripping book, the product of extensive and fine-grained historical research, should change the course of the 'Pius Wars,' if both critics and defenders of Pius XII take its evidence seriously." Michael Burleigh, author of *The Third Reich: A New History* "In this exciting and original work, Mark Riebling has unearthed vital new sources, and he writes elegantly and persuasively on a fascinating subject that has remained hidden in history's shadows." Rabbi David Dalin "In *Church of Spies*, Mark Riebling provides a groundbreaking and riveting account of Pope Pius XII's secret war against Hitler. This richly documented book makes an important contribution to contemporary scholarship about Pius XII and to our understanding of the historical legacy of his pontificate." Ronald J. Rychlak, author of *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* "Church of Spies is an incredible book. It is authentic, documented history that reads like a great action novel. Bonhoeffer, Stauffenberg, the pope, and others plotted to kill Hitler and end the war. Riebling takes us inside their meetings (sometimes held among excavations under Vatican City) and meetings of Hitler and his top advisors. The story that emerges is at times terrifying, tragic, and yet ultimately heroic. This is a book not to be missed." Col. Rose Mary Sheldon, Burgwyn Chair in Military History, Virginia Military Institute "Mark Riebling has set himself a high bar in turning conventional wisdom on its head. He has taken on one of the most controversial and polarizing issues in the history of World War II: the role of the wartime Vatican in fighting the Nazis. By combining new archival material with a lively and convincing narrative he has created a new account of a secret war previously overlooked. This is a highly original contribution to intelligence history." Prof. Vincent A. Lapomarda, author of *The Jesuits and the Third Reich* "Church of Spies captured my attention. It is a remarkable piece of research. It fills out much of the story that was known mainly in skeletal form. It makes the past come alive." Deal *Â Wyatt Hudson, Â Church and Culture* "This is must reading for all Catholics, period, exclamation point." Al Kresta, *Ave Maria Radio* "You'll meet characters in this book that will just fill you with pride about Christian resistance to Hitler. *Â I've shared this with a number of friends already, and everybody who's read this book raves about it. ... Â It's a very*

moving book."David W. Brown, author of *Deep State*"I fully expected to love *Church of Spies* by Mark Riebling, and did. The pope's secret efforts to assassinate Adolf Hitler? It's hard to go wrong with a subject like that, but I was astonished how gripping the whole thing was and in awe of how much excruciating work must have gone into researching the subject. ... That the book even exists seems like an accomplishment. That it is excellent seems like more than we deserve."Peter Earnest, Director, International Spy Museum"A very, very richly researched book. It will have an impact. ... It's really very impressive."Giles MacDonogh, author of *After the Reich*"An excellent, racy account of the Catholic Church's role in the resistance to Hitler and a useful corrective to some of the wilder accusations levelled at Pius XII. ... With lots of colour and scene-setting... it is a ripping good read." *Chronicles* "Church of Spies is a fascinating study of how the Vatican has worked—in this case mostly for good—in crisis and in secret." *Catholic Historical Reviews* "[A] tremendous and most credible examination of a huge range of secondary sources. The strength of [Riebling's] journalistic skills is that he is able to evoke a most vivid picture of both the personalities and the places involved in this dramatic story down to even the details of the furniture of the pope's study."

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As someone interested in what really happened behind the scenes in World War 2, I found this book riveting and hard to put down. Using records from Germany's Institute für Zeitgeschichte and from the Vatican Secret Archives, *Church of Spies* casts light on WWII covert operations and spycraft that remained in the shadows for 75 years. Perhaps most earth shattering and historically game-changing is the proof that a modern Pope, running a vast intelligence network inside Germany, green-lighted Hitler's assassination, something neither FDR or Churchill, so far as we know, risked their reputations to do. "Church of Spies" will inspire many Catholics. It brings to life the heroic priests and ordinary faithful who did not sit on their hands, and who shed their own blood in the Pope's high-stakes espionage to stop the Third Reich. This book will also interest students of the Holocaust. It provides new context for evaluating Pope Pius XII, who opted for quiet clandestine operations instead of loud public speeches. Although not uncritical of Pius, Riebling writes that "he should have spoken out" the book shows the German resistance itself begged the Pope not to do or say anything publicly that would cause retribution against Catholics in Germany who were concurrently planning assassinations and coups against the Third Reich. Written with the attention to detail that one finds in Rick Atkinson's Pulitzer Prize

winning World War II books, Church of Spies reads like a thriller. But the nearly 100 pages of source citations remind us that what happened here is true. And savoring that truth makes reading Church of Spies all the more compelling.

This book was written like a spy novel, but was about actual historical events. I could not put the book down. On September 1st I attended a pre-screening of the National Geographic documentary "The Pope vs Hitler" which was based on the book. That evening there was also a panel discussion with the author, director of the TV documentary and two others. We discovered that it took Mark Riebling 18 years to write this book. The research he put into this reflects this; it is excellent. This is the best book I read so far this year. I cannot praise this book too much. I hope this book helps to clear Pius XII's false reputation.

Mark Riebling's book titled CHURCH OF SPIES should be "the final nail in the coffin" that somehow Pope Pius XII was somehow "Hitler's Pope." Riebling presented a well researched account of how Pope Pius XII, Jesuits, Dominicans, and German Catholics plotted to overthrow Hitler. The plotters often met in Vatican basement to carefully plot Hitler's demise and hopefully shorten the worst war in history. The book presents carefully contrived plans to oust Hitler. While these plans failed, Riebling gave a precise account of the risks involved and the rare courage of those involved some of whom lost their lives. As early as October 20, 1940 Vatican officials and German Catholics plus Jesuits and Dominicans plotted to assassinate Hitler. In a conversation between Pope Pius XII, Cardinal Faulhaber, Cardinal Innitzer, and Cardinal Schulte discussed if the morality of clandestine operations. They reasoned that if St. Paul used a clandestine ploy to escape incarceration, the morality of such clandestine was justified if only because great saints used such methods. Hitler was vaguely aware of the above mentioned plots. Hitler & co. HATED Catholics and Catholicism. In fact, German leaders claimed that Polish Catholic clergy were much more dangerous than Polish Marxists/Communists. As "the plot thickened," Pius XII was drawn into the plot. Obviously, Pope Pius had not love for Big Communism, he was more concerned about Hitler's Germany since Germany was closer and more dangerous to Catholics and Vatican officials. Hitler did not think middle class people and even Marxists were idealistic enough to try to assassinate Hitler, but Catholic idealism would inspire Catholics to take the risk whatever the cost. Hitler said he feared "Black Crows" (Catholic priests) in the confessional more than Marxists or anyone else. Those who were involved in plots against Hitler were often "a cast of characters." For example Joey Ox had a sense of humor and extracted information in drinking contests. As an aside, the Russians usually

won these contests. Another "character" was Sister Pia who supposedly had risqué reputation. Many supposedly disciplined German dignitaries who plotted against Hitler had amusing humorous secret lives which made for humorous reading. "Do gooders" wanted to condemn Pius XII for being a spy and use of violence to get rid of Hitler. Such apprehensively do-gooders should study history to know full well that Catholic dignitaries often worked to mitigate tyrants or get rid of them. This is made very clear on page 62. Pius XII's distinction is that he was more involved than his predecessors in "cloak and dagger" operations. Pius XII was advised to restrain any PUBLIC denunciation of Hitler & co. because such public statements would lead to more intense persecution of Catholics and Jews in German controlled Europe. Such a ploy helped Pius XII and plotters avoid closer scrutiny which was already in place. One good reason offered by St. Thomas Aquinas, Jesuits, and other Catholics about ousting tyrants is that such tyrants could impose tyranny and force people to commit acts that were contrary to civilized behavior. Hitler could sometimes have "the luck of the devil" when he left a meeting half an hour earlier than he was supposed and escaped a bomb blast. As readers may note, the above mentioned plots were complex and open to exposure. Because German authorities were aware of Catholic resistance, a new program was started called "The Black Network" so named because of Catholic clergy's attire. As some Catholic clergy plotted against Hitler & co., the German SS now had plots to get rid of Catholic clergy. In fact, German agents had a plot to invade the Vatican, kidnap or assassinate Pius XII, and move the Papacy to Lichtenstein. Pius XII was well aware of the plot, but he was NOT the least bit intimidated. To further antagonize the German SS and Hitler, Pius XII's efforts extended to saving refugees including Jewish people which many Jewish people acknowledged during Pius XII's lifetime and during Pius XII's Requiem Mass in October, 1958. Pius XII knew that after early German victories and Mussolini's alliance with Hitler, the Vatican was left in a "sea of Fascism." Yet, Pius and Catholic leaders remained undaunted. Even some German Catholics showed resistance. For example, when German authorities tried to close a Catholic school in Germany, German wives and mothers literally attacked the German in charge and forced him to reopen the school. Such actions were a bad omen for anti-Catholic Germans. While Catholics and the Vatican were in a sea of Fascism, Catholics were very clever. Catholic priests and nuns posed as serious lovers to avoid suspicion. While such actions were against Jesuit rules and the rules of other Catholic religious orders, a "higher calling" prevailed. Riebling carefully noted Pius XII's occasional despair. When Pius XII read about German plans to increase persecution, he was saddened and prayed in despair. Some German mothers were forced to watch their children being beheaded. White Rose peaceful resistance was exposed, and these pacifists were decapitated. Yet, as Riebling noted Pius XII still

showed more sense than "allied" political leaders when Pius XII voiced opposition to Casablanca Conference's demand for "unconditional surrender" which Pius XII knew would only add to the suffering after WW II ended. While Hitler & co. lost WW II, Hitler was lucky. As noted above, Hitler a previous plot. In 1944, Hitler survived another plot even though he was wounded. The plotters paid dearly for the failed plot. Among those who were victims of torture and death were obviously Catholic priests including Jesuits who were the most hated by the German SS. Yet some of the plotters survived either by rare courage and/or clever efforts to avoid detection. One hero was Joey Ox "...won his life because he was ready to lose it. Mark Riebling's book CHURCH OF SPIES reads like "a thriller." While the book is carefully researched and scholarly, the book is NEVER boring. The intricacies and complex events are made clear, and Riebling did a good job in explaining the "cross currents" of events, plots, and counter plots. The false phrase of "Hitler's Pope" is left "dead and buried" via this well written book which is never boring. James E. Egolf November 29, 2015

There are not many books on why the Pope did not speak out about the Nazis and Hitler during the second world war. This book is a good report on why that was and more important what the Pope and Catholics actually were doing during these years. We are reminded of how terrible the Nazis were however this book reports on the many Germans who tried to remove Hitler from power and the difficulties that they faced in achieving this goal. A very good report on this subject.

Aside from the obvious libel that Pius XII was "Hitler's pope", the Vatican's role in World War II has been unknown to most people. The temptation is to assume that the Church stood back in dismay but didn't do a whole lot to remedy the situation. This book takes care of that ambiguity in the most scholarly possible way. It turns out that, yes, the Vatican and Pope Pius XII did indeed wage war against Hitler and the Third Reich, but that war could not be obvious or overt for any number of reasons, which are well explained in the book. The number of people -- including some very colorful and interesting characters -- who were thus engaged is astonishing, as is the extent of their penetration of the Third Reich hierarchy, and the extent of their intelligence operations. It reads like a spy novel, except that it's all true -- and eye-opening as well. Highly recommended!

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