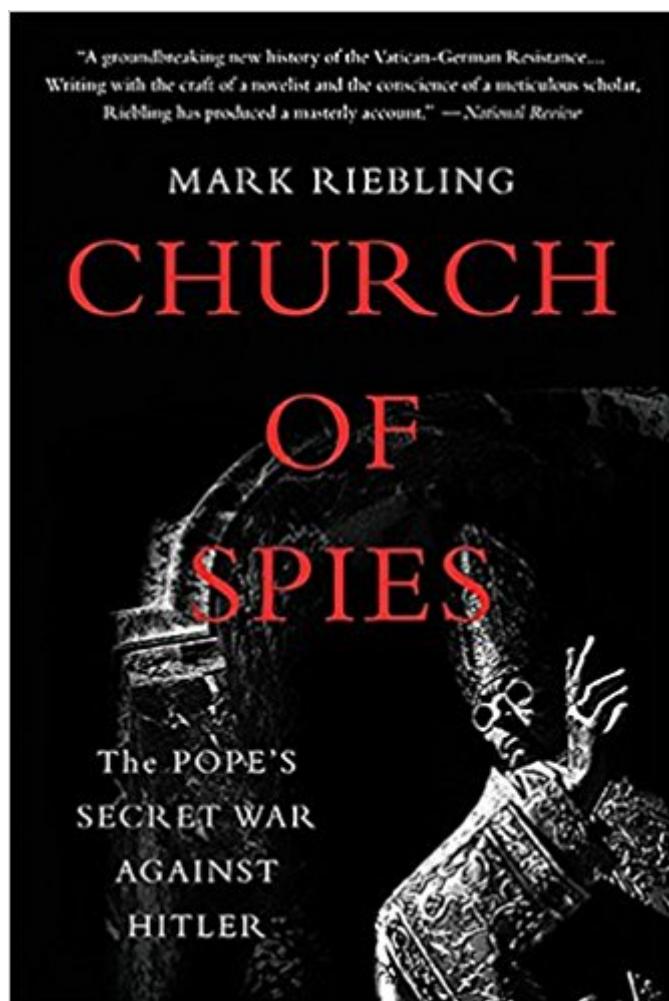


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# Church Of Spies: The Pope's Secret War Against Hitler



## Synopsis

Hailed as "powerful and provocative" (Washington Post), "heart-pounding" (New York Times) and "brilliant" (Kirkus), intelligence expert Mark Riebling's groundbreaking book—*The Wedge*—inspired "no fewer than seven assorted congressional committees, internal evaluators, and blue-ribbon panels" (Wall Street Journal). Now, in the long-awaited *The Church of Spies*, Riebling documents an epic secret battle in the Second World War -- and reframes one of the great historical controversies of our age. The Vatican's stance toward Nazism 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.圣ly 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. *The 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' 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, *The Church of Spies* throws open the Vatican's doors to reveal some of the most astonishing events in the history of the papacy.

## Customer Reviews

CIA Studies in Intelligence—*The Wedge* (Unclassified Edition)"[E]xciting.... deals fairly with the pope's theological and political rationale.... thoroughly documented with primary sources... *The Church of Spies* is the best account of the subject to date. Amen!"—*Intelligencer: Journal of U. S. Intelligence Studies*"[A] remarkable book... Mark Riebling gained access to Vatican documents not viewed by any previous author. The scope of Riebling's book is demonstrated by 104 pages of chapter notes (which are worth the read on their own). ... Incredibly brave men [are] highlighted in Riebling's highly readable narrative. ... Riebling by no means exonerates Pius. 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."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 Führer."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."Frederic le Moal, *Le Littéraire* (Paris)"This crucial book compellingly documents Pius XII's anti-Nazi actions. Against the Marxist theory of Catholic-fascism, it details Nazi hatred of the Roman Church - explaining why Catholics fought Hitler with more fervor than Protestants did. Rather than denying Pius's infamous "silence," Riebling makes it the core of his case: pressured by all sides to watch his words, Pius did not so much remain above the fray as work below it. That says it all!"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."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."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."Ernest Greco, *Catholic Social Science Review*"Those historians and others who continue to cling to the Hitler's Pope myth despite the abundant evidence to the contrary will have an even more difficult task as they are faced with Mark Riebling's well-documented page-turner."Happy Catholic.com"Action-packed! At the beginning, the pope wires the Papal Library with the best surveillance technology of the time. At the end, we see conspirators stage a daring prison break in the Alps. In between are 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." Tomas Borges, *El Ruiz-Healy Times* (Mexico City) "The author explains with great wisdom and after an arduous investigation how the Catholic Church safeguards its interests through the world's oldest espionage system. He demolishes the myth that Pope Pius XII (Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli) was Hitler's Pope. ... The book reads a thrillngly as a spy novel. As a former intelligence officer I give it my highest recommendation!" 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!" 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 Rumor Service (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, *Law and Liberty* "Immensely well informed and hugely engrossing." Catholic Herald (UK) "Mark Riebling's Church of Spies 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...." 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&apos; interests you at all, get this book." 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 World War 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." 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." Different Bugle "[A] page-turner.... riveting." Rome Reports "[A] moral adventure story ... Church of Spies 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." Jeff Mirus, *Catholic Culture* "Riebling's study simply cannot be dismissed. ... painstakingly

describes the Pope's leading role in a network of Catholic spies which aimed to assassinate Hitler.... not only extensively researched but also dramatically written. "A Church of Spies quite simply reads like an adventure novel from the first page to the last." Francis Phillips, 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." Deal Wyatt Hudson, 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. I've shared this with a number of friends already, and everybody who's read this book raves about it. ... 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's 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." H-Net<sup>17</sup>; 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.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Bottum, Washington Free Beacon<sup>19</sup>; Riebling recounts in a fast, readable style the fumblings, betrayals, and bad luck that plagued attempts to remove Hitler. Through it all, he shows the Vatican looming in the background <sup>20</sup>; 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.â•George Weigel, First Things&#147;[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.â•Wall Street Journal&#147;A page-turning book.... Fascinating.â•Washington Times&#147;[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.â•War on the Rocks&#147;After years of painstaking research in the Vatican&#39;s archives, Riebling has a different and heart-pounding story to tell of the Pope&#39;s network of spies that fought to bring about Hitler&#39;s downfall.... [An] amazing book that combines the rigor of history with the storytelling of a novel.â•National Review

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