

Call for articles

Fall 2023 Issue of *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*

The Vatican, the Church, and the Holocaust: New Research Perspectives and the Pius XII Archives

Edited by Dr. Nina Valbousquet

With the opening of the Vatican archives for the pontificate of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), this issue of the *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* aims to review the recent developments of the scholarship and to explore new research avenues on the controversial question of the Vatican and the Church's attitudes towards the Holocaust.

"The Church is not afraid of history": On March 4, 2019, Pope Francis announced the declassification of the Vatican archives for the pontificate of Pius XII, asserting his "confidence" in "serious and objective historical research." One year later, on March 2, 2020, the Vatican did indeed make these unpublished documents accessible to the scientific community. Given the wide range of materials available and the exceptional archival process, this opening signals a historic change. The decision was long-awaited for it concerns a highly debated pontificate and a period of great political and religious mutations, from the outbreak of WWII to the eve of the Second Vatican Council.

The 2020 opening immediately revived «old polemics» (Daniele Menozzi), dubbed the «Pius Wars,» about the Vatican's attitude regarding Nazism and the persecution of the Jews. Fueled by the project of Pacelli's beatification, this two-sided debate, between condemnation and apology, goes back in part to the controversy sparked in the 1960s by *The Deputy* (1963), a German play by Rolf Hochhuth, which accused Pius XII of silent complicity in the genocide of the Jewish people. The controversy

prompted an initial response from the Vatican with the publication of 11 volumes of documents between 1965 and 1981. Selected by four Jesuit historians, the collection was entitled *Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. In the absence of direct access to the archives, this collection of sources has not, however, exhausted the questions of the scientific community.

The opening of the Pius XII archives will likely pave the way for a more nuanced and granular picture of the Vatican's perceptions, motivations, and actions regarding the Holocaust. While the question has often been approached from a moral and theological perspective, this issue also wishes to highlight the political, diplomatic, international, and humanitarian dimensions by assessing both the agency and the limitations of an institution, which is at once spiritual and temporal, in the face of extreme violence and genocide.

In addition to the pope's silences, historian Giovanni Miccoli stressed the «dilemmas» of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in a context of crisis. These dilemmas covered political, diplomatic, humanitarian, and theological issues, especially with respect to the tension between charity and neutrality. The newly available archives will likely shed new light on the complexity and rationales behind these choices. The Vatican archives allow scholars to place the question of Church responses to the Holocaust in a broader framework by examining how it intersects with other themes, such as humanitarian assistance;

the refugee crisis before, during, and after the war; the relationship with fascism and democracy; the defense of human rights; liturgical reforms; and networks of religious diplomacy. The goal is to look beyond the memorial pitfalls of the «Pius Wars» by broadening the research's focus to include not just the pope, but also wider circles of actors involved in the Vatican and at every level of the Church.

Indeed, while the controversies focus on the personality of Pius XII, the examination of the new archives and their cross-referencing with other documentary collections shed light on the diversity of the Catholic world and «the sociological complexity of the Churches» (Renato Moro). In particular, this special issue aims to reconstruct a subtler multiscalar analysis by bringing to light the nuances and even gaps between the different levels of the hierarchy. The richness of the Vatican's documentary holdings, from letters of unknown individuals to diplomatic correspondence, also calls for a cross-methodological approach encompassing a variety of fields and ranging from micro-history to global history. Finally, the scholarly takeaways of the archives of previous pontificates (Benedict XV and Pius XI), now paired with the archives of the lengthy pontificate of Pius XII, make it possible to consider a more extended timeline through a «transwar» lens, thus enabling the study of the two world wars and the post-war period as a whole.

While the Vatican remains the main focus of this issue, articles should not necessarily be limited to this single topic. Rather, comparative and intersectional perspectives, whether in terms of geography, chronology, actors, or sources, are welcome. Articles may combine historiographical reflection and state-of-the-art research with field surveys and case studies. The exploration of archival materials from the Vatican is valued, and authors are encouraged to propose new avenues of research related to these new sources. While the list is not exhaustive, some of the themes and approaches for this issue include:

- Christian anti-Judaism and the Vatican's attitude towards antisemitism, and especially how the «historical memory of the Church» (Miccoli) may or may not have conditioned ecclesiastical responses to antisemitic persecutions.

- Humanitarian aid and the Vatican's responses to humanitarian crises, mass warfare, and genocide starting with the pontificates of Benedict XV and Pius XI, specifically WWI, the Armenian genocide, the interwar refugee crisis, and the establishment of pontifical aid commissions during WWII (Commissione Soccorsi and Ufficio Informazione).
- The reception of antisemitic and racial laws (Nuremberg laws; Italian, Romanian, and Hungarian racial laws; and the Vichy anti-Jewish legislation).
- The diplomacy of the Holy See in response to the Holocaust, the role of the nuncios and apostolic delegates in very different contexts, and the relationship with other state and international diplomacies.
- The reception of information on the extermination of the Jews and the question of public or private condemnation.
- Relations with the national churches and with local actors (religious leaders, missionaries, lay people, and charitable organizations) and the hierarchical, dogmatic, and political tensions that arose from these interactions.
- Methods of assistance, nominative files and petitions, and the fate of mixed families and converted Jews.
- Connection or competition with other Christian churches, with religious and non-religious humanitarian organizations (e.g. ICRC, YMCA, and Joint), and other aid networks, from the diplomatic level to grassroots aid.
- The postwar period: refugees, displaced persons, and survivors, the restitution of hidden children (the Finaly Affair), postwar trials, and war criminals' escape.
- The impact of the Holocaust on Jewish-Catholic relations and theological developments (Jewish-Christian Friendship, Vatican II).
- Memory: the aftermath of the Holocaust, the controversies of the 1960s, and the memory policies of the Church and the Vatican ("We Remember," 1998) until today.
- The Vatican Archives: document research, archival policies, and issues regarding memory and public impact.

Article proposals (consisting of a 500/700-word abstract and 2/3 lines of biography) should be sent before January 20, 2022 to nina.valbousquet@gmail.com

The issue's articles (maximum of 50,000 characters, including spaces and bibliography) can be written in French, Italian, or English (they will be translated into French) and are due by September 2022 for publication in the autumn 2023 issue.