

"Deserting the Sinking Ship:
Ratlines, Vatican and the Nazi Escape from Justice"

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It may be surprising to some that after millions of innocent victims died at the merciless hands of the Nazis, many war criminals were never brought to justice at the conclusion of World War II. Somehow Nazi war criminals like Joseph Mengele who performed atrocious medical experiments on Jews and other concentration camp prisoners, Martin Bormann, head of the Nazi Party Chancellery, Klaus Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyons," as well as thousands of others, all managed to elude authorities. The exodus of millions of refugees gave these Nazis the camouflage needed for their escape from justice. Posing as refugees themselves, they were able to hide among those they persecuted. These criminals did not slip through the hands of justice without help. They found a most unlikely vanguard, the Catholic Church, which aided at least 80,000¹ war criminals in their flight to Latin America. This article is the story of the so-called Ratline, an intricate, underground railroad created to abet Nazi war criminals in their escape from Europe and from punishment. The Ratline began its mission immediately after the war and continued operation until well into the fifties. It received its name after its discovery by U. S. intelligence. Ratline is the military term for the end point on a rescue ladder suspended from a helicopter. This means of rescue is used in situations where a soldier

¹Penny Lernoux, *People of God* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 288 and L. Farago, *Aftermath* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 183.

is stranded and there is no other way to reach him.² Some well-known organizations such as the Catholic Church and the United States Government were involved in the Ratline, and the effects of their actions are still being felt today, for example, in terrorist attacks on the Jewish population in Latin America, the terminal point for the Ratline. These organizations continue either to deny their participation or to conceal information so that the full extent of their participation can never be known. One thing is certain, without the Catholic Church, the Ratline could not have existed.

Discovery of the Ratline: The La Vista Report

Under the American Army's Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), Vincent La Vista, a senior Rome officer of the Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, discovered the Ratline in 1947 while investigating the infiltration of Soviet agents to the United States. On January 20, 1947 La Vista received his instructions from the U. S. Legation in Vienna and by March 13 his investigation was upgraded from "secret" to "top secret", because he had discovered that the Vatican was involved in covert activities.³ Dated May 15, 1947 and entitled *Illegal Emigration Movements In and Through Italy*, his final report was finally declassified in

²Mark Aarons and John Loftus, *Unholy Trinity* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), p. xi.

³Alexander Zvielli, "Unveiled Top-Secret Report Exposes: The World War II 'Rat Route'," *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, December 15, 1990.

1990. It was the first piece of documentation regarding revealing the existence of the Ratline.

The Vatican of course is the largest single organization involved in the illegal movement of emigrants The justification of the Vatican for its participation in this illegal traffic is simply the propagation of the Faith. It is the Vatican's desire to assist any person, regardless of nationality or political beliefs, as long as that person can prove himself to be a Catholic. This of course from the practical point of view is a dangerous practice. The Vatican further justifies its participation by its desire to infiltrate, not only European countries but Latin-American countries as well, with people of all political beliefs as long as they are anti-Communist and pro-Catholic Church. Knowing this, and knowing the methods of operation of Catholic agencies which are sponsoring the emigration of anti-Communists to these countries, the Communists are using these very agencies for the purpose of sending their own agents to these same countries.⁴

In Rome, La Vista witnessed a transaction of the Ratline in the form of an interview between two Hungarian-speaking informants, working for La Vista, and one Father Gallov, head of the Hungarian Agency, a Vatican-sponsored organization aiding Hungarian refugees. During the interview the informants told Fr. Gallov that they had been in a labor camp in the Russian Zone of Occupation in Austria and had lost their families in bombing raids. Neither man had any identification papers. An affidavit was written in longhand for the first man and signed by the second man, who swore that it was true. The man was then sent to the International Red Cross (IRC) in Rome where, within 30

⁴Vincent La Vista, 'Illegal Emigration Movements in and Through Italy', 15 May 1947, USNA, RG 59, FW 800.0128/5-1547, p. 2.

minutes, he was furnished an IRC passport. A week later the two informants returned to Fr. Gallov, and using his new identification papers the first informant verified the story of the second informant, who also obtained an IRC passport.

Of course, Fr. Gallov, was not the only priest involved in the Ratline. Additional clergy involvement is demonstrated in Appendix E of the La Vista report, which contains surveillance information regarding another attempted Nazi escape. On July 27, 1946 another informant, also working for La Vista in Rome, had been contacted by two escapees from the Rimini concentration camp sent to him by Carlo Haas, a top Nazi official, to obtain aid in emigrating to South America. These escapees were identified as Hans Vorkoeper and Walter Fueting. While in Rome Fueting resided in the apartment of a former employee of the German Embassy to the Vatican. The escapees made contact with two priests who would provide visas and with two additional escapees, Benno Kettler and Giovanni Ludwig. Fueting also contacted a Baronessa Carbonella owner of the Cimes Company, a firm specializing in imports and exports, who gave Fueting 60,000 lire and informed him that when he arrived in South America he would become a representative for Cimes. Kettler separated from the group, and before the remaining three escapees could depart from Genoa, they were apprehended along with an additional person named Schwichtenberg. Schwichtenberg was found to be in possession of false discharge permits from various concentration camps which he

was distributing to escapees in the Ratline. After interrogation of all the persons concerned, it was found that they had contacted Dr. Willy Nix, head of the Free German Committee in Italy, who had supplied them with identification papers, fully aware that in each case the person requesting the documents was a wanted criminal.⁵ In addition the refugees had contacted a certain Padre Bayer who was useful "in supplying food and letters from the Vatican."⁶ La Vista personally contacted every individual involved in this surveillance except Dr. Nix, who was under a top secret investigation by the Italian government and who escaped arrest by fleeing to the Vatican where he was residing at the time La Vista's report was prepared.

The protection of Dr. Nix is not the only evidence in the La Vista report tying the Vatican directly to the Ratline, a list of relief and welfare organizations in Rome engaging in or suspected of illegal emigration was also included in the document.⁷ Twenty-two different Vatican organizations including all of the various refugee committees were included on this list; most of these organizations were directed by priests.

⁵*Ibid.*, 3 App. E.

⁶*Ibid.*, 4 App. E.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1 App. A.

Factors Contributing to the Existence of the Ratline

As the La Vista report illustrates, many factors contributed to the overwhelming success of the Ratline. First, the International Red Cross, which provided papers for all Ratline traffic, put too much faith in the affidavits of individual clergy⁸ and produced easily falsified passports. Pictures on IRC passports were affixed to the passport with ordinary paste⁹ and no seal was impressed through the picture or anywhere else on the passport, thus it was easy to change pictures without altering the document in any other way. Second, individual clergymen and priests did not adequately investigate the identity of individuals coming to them for affidavits. Third, numerous wealthy and well-placed Nazi sympathizers like Dr. Nix and Baronessa Carbonella were able to contribute significantly to the escape of Nazi war criminals. Forth, the existence of an overarching organization behind the Ratline is evident. War criminals including Adolf Eichmann director of the Holocaust; Franz Stangl, commandant of the Treblinka death camp charged with the murder of at least 400,000 Jews; Erik Priebke, participant in the massacre of 335 Italian civilians in March, 1944; SS *Hauptsturmbahnfuhrer* Erich Rajakowitsch responsible for the deportation of over 100,000 Dutch Jews and Walter Rauff, SS commander charged with the murder of

⁸*Ibid.*, 5 App. E.

⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

97,000 Jews in mobile gas chambers all knew to contact the Catholic Church to get help. These as well as thousands of others if not more were helped by one man: Alois Hudal.

Primary Catholic Church Involvement: Bishop Alois Hudal

In 1924, Fr. Alois Hudal was named Rector of the *Anima*, a German-endowed college dedicated to the education of priests. In 1930 he began working in the Holy Office at the Vatican, where his job was to promote Catholic ideology. In 1933 he was consecrated Titular Bishop. It is certain that Hudal had a high place in the Vatican. In 1991, Monsignor Johannes Nedbal, then rector of the *Anima*, was certain that Hudal was very close to Pius XI. Nedbal cites Hudal's part in the Austrian *Concordat* as the reason for his [own] appointment as Bishop.¹⁰ Hudal also had a long friendship with the future Pope Pius XII, Eugenio Pacelli, which began when then Cardinal Pacelli recommended Hudal for the rectorate. Bishop Weinbacher, who took over the rectorship upon Hudal's retirement, told Gene Sereny that Bishop Hudal "was very close to Pope Pius XII--there is no doubt of that; they were friends."¹¹ It is also certain that Bishop Hudal was a Nazi sympathizer and a fanatic anti-Communist. Hitler himself claimed that Hudal was the Church's most determined and ambitious campaigner against Marxism.¹² According to W. Stevenson, ". . . one is forced to conclude from [Hudal's]

¹⁰Aarons and Loftus, 32.

¹¹G. Sereny, *Into That Darkness* (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 305.

¹²Farago, 188.

writings that he was obsessed with the anti-Christian nature of Communism. What concerned him, beyond anything, was the destruction of the Bolshevik Devil."¹³ In 1937, he published *The Fundamentals of National Socialism*, which attempted to reconcile National Socialism and the Church. Hudal's Nazi sympathies were well-known after the publication of this book, but they had no detrimental effect on his standing at the Vatican. On the contrary, in 1944 the Vatican gained Allied permission to send a representative to the German-speaking internees in Italy, and Bishop Hudal was chosen for the job. In these refugee camps Hudal put his ideology to work; he was free to spread the word of the Ratline to any war criminals hiding among genuine refugees. After World War II the *Anima* became the Vatican refugee center for those of Austrian nationality. Using his position as rector of the *Anima*, Hudal became an integral part of the Ratline as head of the Vatican's Austrian refugee committee and helped "as many as 50,000 Nazis, if not more"¹⁴ escape from criminal proceedings. In his *Roman Diary* (published in 1976), Hudal confides that personal and religious

realizations moved me after 1945 to dedicate my charitable endeavors primarily toward the former adherents of National Socialism and Fascism and especially toward those so-called "war criminals" who were persecuted by the Communists and "Christian" democrats--often using means which

¹³W. Stevenson, *The Bormann Brotherhood* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), p. 232.

¹⁴Farago, 183.

hardly differed from those of their former enemies. Even though the accused were often personally innocent and were simply the executive organs carrying out orders of their superiors, they became the scapegoats for the monumental failures of the [Nazi] regime I give thanks, however, to the Lord God, that He opened my eyes and without my deserving it gave me the ability to visit many victims of the post-war era in prisons and concentration camps, there to console them and to have snatched them from their torturers by allowing them to flee to happier lands by means of falsified exit documents.¹⁵

Nazi Confirmation of Hudal's Activities

Various Nazi war criminals have confirmed Hudal's activities in the Ratline. Franz Stangl, for example, testified that Bishop Hudal helped him escape and further stated that Hudal "knew exactly who I was."¹⁶ Stangl, in an interview with Gene Sereny, discussed the circumstances surrounding his escape.

It was too strange, you know . . . I had no idea how one went about finding a bishop at the Vatican. I arrived in Rome and walked across a bridge over the Tiber and suddenly found myself face to face with a former comrade: there, in the middle of Rome where there were millions of people. He'd been in the security police in France and they wanted to put him on trial there. He'd been extradited from Glasenbach by the French and escaped in the Tyrol when on the way to France. Anyway, he said at once, "Are you on your way to see Hulda?" [A common mispronunciation of Hudal's name.] I said yes, but that I didn't know where to find him. So he told me, but he said not to go until the next day and he told me where I could go for the night. But I didn't see why I shouldn't go at once, so I did--it couldn't have taken me more than half an hour to get there. The Bishop came into the room where I was waiting

¹⁵Alois Hudal, *Romische Tagebuecher* (Austria: Graz, 1976), p. 21.

¹⁶Stevenson, 263.

and he held out both his hands and said, "You must be Franz Stangl. I was expecting you."

What did Bishop Hudal do for you?

Well, first he got me quarters in Rome where I was to stay till my papers came through. And he gave me a bit more money--I had almost nothing left. Then, after a couple of weeks, he called me in and gave me my new passport--a Red Cross passport.

Did it actually say 'Red Cross Passport'?

Yes. It was a whitish booklet and there was a red cross on the cover--it was the same sort of thing, you know, as the old Nasen passports. [He had seen those when he was in the police in Linz.] They'd reversed my name by mistake; it was made out to Paul F. Stangl. I pointed it out to the Bishop. I said, "They made a mistake, this is incorrect. My name is Franz D. Paul Stangl." But he patted my shoulder and said, "Let's let sleeping dogs lie--never mind." He got me an entrance visa to Syria and a job in a textile mill in Damascus, and he gave me a ticket for the ship. So I went to Syria. After a while my family joined me and three years later, in 1951, we emigrated to Brazil.¹⁷

The stories of other captured Nazis corroborate Hudal's dedication to the Ratline's cause. Nazi collaborator Erich Rajakowitsch and his family (including his daughter's boyfriend) escaped from the Netherlands to Italy, where Rajakowitsch found his way to Bishop Hudal in Rome, who put up the family in one of the hospitable monasteries and then arranged their trip to Argentina.¹⁸ Walter Rauff's escape from an Allied P.O.W. camp in Rimini, Italy in 1946 was engineered by the Hudal organization.

Rauff's departure from the camp was aided by two priests who had been sent to Rimini to help him

¹⁷Sereny, 289-290.

¹⁸Farago, 194.

when his pleas reached Rome. Then other priests smuggled him out of Naples and took him to Rome, where it was much easier to submerge [him] in the maze of friendly monasteries. At one time, Rauff taught French and arithmetic in an orphanage on Via Pia run by nuns. He was lonely. His wife and children were left behind in East Germany, and he yearned for them. The priests came to his aid again. "With [their] help," he [later] wrote, "they were able to join me in Rome."¹⁹

Rauff, like Stangl, left Italy for Damascus and from Syria fled to Latin America. He later testified "that he stayed at Vatican Convents for 18 months before leaving Italy."²⁰ Erik Priebke, recently discovered living in Baralochi, Argentina also escaped from the P.O.W. camp in Rimini. As he recently stated to reporters, "I couldn't leave [Italy] with my own passport so I asked for help from the Vatican. It got word to me through Bishop Alois Hudal that it was prepared to help me."²¹ Priebke landed in Buenos Aires under his own name.

Hudal's Connection to the Ratline's Terminus: Montini

Like Stangl, Rajakowitsch, Rauff and Priebke, all of the fugitives escaping through the Ratline ended up in Latin America, a large majority of them in Buenos Aires, from where they dispersed mostly throughout Argentina, but even to Brazil, Paraguay, and Chile. Hudal needed contacts in South America to ensure the safe arrival of his escapees. His link to these contacts came from an individual who was

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 201.

²⁰D. Hume, "Wiesenthal Urges Vatican to Admit "Error" About Fleeing Nazis," *Reuters Northern European Service*, February 16, 1984.

²¹"The Ghosts of the Ardeatine Caves," *Response Summer 1994*, p. 3.

not only important for his Argentinean connections, but also for his status within the Vatican: Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, the Vatican Secretary of State from 1944 to 1948 and future Pope Paul VI. Monsignor Montini took up his important position under peculiar circumstances. In 1944 Cardinal Maglione, Vatican Secretary of State, died and his duties were split between two pro-secretaries: Monsignor Domenico Tardini, described as "a sheltered Roman ignorant of the ways of the world,"²² and Monsignor Montini "who shared the Pope's diplomatic talent and aversion to Communism."²³ It was Montini who supervised the issuance of refugee travel documents as well as *Caritas Internationalis*, a Catholic charity organization which paid living and traveling expenses to help refugees, and most importantly gave Hudal the necessary link to Argentina. Father Egidio, who worked for the Argentine Central Intelligence Bureau (AICA),²⁴ compiled a report on the escape of the head of the Nazi Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, which clarifies the link between Montini and Argentina.

Around 1947, the department of the Vatican's Secretariat of State helping displaced persons was under the direction of Monsignor Jose [Giovanni] Montini, whose assistant in providing travel documents for refugees was an Argentinean priest, named Silva. It was the latter who was the link between the Bishop of Genoa, Monsignor Guiseppe Siri, the wife of the president of the Republic of

²²Farago, 190.

²³*Ibid.*, 190.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 214.

Argentina, Senora Maria Duarte Ibarguren de Peron, and former deputy fuehrer Martin Bormann.²⁵

Bormann escaped down the Ratline and reached South America in priest's robes and in possession of a regular Vatican passport, of the type issued by Montini's office.²⁶

The link between Hudal, through Montini, to Peron's wife was of paramount importance for the Ratline. Peron, the fascist president of Argentina (and a high official in a Catholic elite organization called the Knights of Malta), wanted to offer Nazi war criminals safe asylum in order to recruit scientists and technicians of the Third Reich for the industrialization of Argentina. Thus, Hudal acquired a safe terminus for the Ratline. Besides giving Hudal access to *Caritas Internationalis* and connections in South America, Montini contributed to the Ratline in other ways. He was a member of the Vatican Organization to Control the Interior Italian Situation, an organization formed by the Vatican to ensure an anti-Communist government in the Italian election of 1948. Montini's role in this organization, as described by the U. S. Army, was to maintain relations between the Vatican and "the Italian Episcopate and to direct through it the actions of all the rectors of Italy and to be informed by them about the feelings of the population."²⁷ These duties gave Montini contact with every rector in Italy, and with this network of contacts Montini could easily have

²⁵*Ibid.*, 215.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 192.

²⁷Enclosure to despatch no. 3045, from the Rome Area Allied Command APO 794, 2/1/46.

establish numerous hideouts throughout Italy where Hudal's Ratline travelers could be safely harbored until exiting Europe via Genoa.

Montini: More than a Middleman?

Montini also organized the official Vatican network of refugee committees in Rome. There were different locations for each nationality type of refugee. "Lithuanians went to see Reverend Jatulevicius at No. 6 on the Via Lucullo, for example, while Padre Gallov at 33 Via dei Parione aided Hungarians and Monsignors Dragonovic and Magerec at the *Instituto di St. Jeronimus* were in charge of Croatian relief, and so forth."²⁸ These committees later comprised the list of suspect organizations found in the La Vista report. Reverend Jatulevicius, Padre Gallov and Monsignor Magerec can be traced directly back to the list of clergy La Vista defined as Ratline operators in his report,²⁹ and Dragonovic was responsible for the smuggling of 30,000 Croatians by means of the Ratline.³⁰ Was it mere coincidence that the Vatican, through Montini, selected at least one pro-Nazi member of clergy to direct refugee affairs for each nationality? The improbability of such a coincidence implies a concentrated effort to organize Ratline contact for every Vatican refugee committee. Thus war criminals could easily be identified for special, covert

²⁸C. Simpson, *Blowback* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 179.

²⁹La Vista, Appendix A.

³⁰Farago, 183.

treatment from among innocent refugees regardless of which national committee they happened to contact in Rome.

One final questionable activity was carried out through the Office of the Vatican Secretary of State, not under Montini's signature, but rather the signature of Montini's co-secretary, Domenico Tardini. Frequently in 1945 and 1946 Monsignor Tardini contacted various individuals in the United States to request permission for the "possible resettlement in Latin America of displaced persons"³¹ (the U. S. had to be consulted, because the Allies controlled all emigration and resettlement after the war). If Tardini was as naive as he is described in *Aftermath*, Montini might well have persuaded him to take the initiative in convincing the American government that Latin America was a valuable area for the placement of refugees. Tardini might not even have known the true identity of the individuals for whom he was speaking. All this is pure speculation, of course, but at any rate, extensive correspondence did take place in the crucial years of 1945 and 1946 concerning the Vatican sponsorship of refugees emigrating to Latin America.

The Church: A Perfect Vehicle for the Ratline

More circumstantial evidence is available on the administration of the Ratline. The Vatican was given access to numerous Allied displaced person and refugee camps. Few

³¹See letter from Franklin Gowen to Homer M. Byington, Jr. of 1/30/46, USNA, Myron Taylor Papers, Box 8.

organizations besides the Vatican had the means to reach war criminals hiding in Allied camps. As the Vatican sent Hudal to German speaking refugees in Italian camps, so it also requested the right to send emissaries to camps all over Europe. In many cases, as in the escapes of Rauff and Priebke discussed above, the clergy was contacted initially by pleas from Nazis in such refugee camps and responded accordingly. Officials at the Vatican could have very well received a plea from a hiding war criminal and subsequently come to his aid as they could do for numerous criminals hiding in these camps, because the Allied authorities gave permission for the clergy to minister to the refugees. With all of the Nazis arriving in Rome at various times and places, the Ratline had to be very flexible. The numerous routes within the Ratline depended on the continuous activities of key figures, like Montini and Hudal, who had a wide network of contacts within the Church and the International Red Cross. Whenever a Nazi showed up in Rome seeking help steps were taken on an individual ad hoc basis. Over time these steps became more concrete, thus with repetition of the processes needed to shelter and transport escapees the Ratline became a reliable institution. In order to function, the Ratline needed virtually immediate access to passports and funding. Passports were readily available through the International Red Cross. Madame Gertrude Dupuis, a war time IRC administrator, commented

if Bishop Hudal asked for some of the *Laisser-passers* to be made out to his specifications . . . which then lacked only the holder's signature to make them valid, and if he asked for them to be sent to him . . . well, they probably were. It was comparatively simple for him to achieve this; he was a bishop, don't forget--that did help. It did have some effect. Certainly, it is highly unlikely that Stangl, or people like him, would have risked . . . or perhaps that Hudal would have risked for them, or would have allowed them to risk--formulate it as you wish--coming down here to queue up with hundreds of people. We had dozens of Jewish camp survivors around. Any of them might have been someone who would have recognized an individual like Stangl. This was well known. So how could he have risked it? Yes, of course, if Hudal enabled Stangl and others like him to avoid the necessity of a personal visit to these offices--and they obviously did avoid it--then one is driven to the conclusion that Hudal knew who these people were; or at least knew that they were wanted.³²

Ratline Financing: Three Probable Parties

Funding for the Ratline is a very important issue, because the covert nature of the Ratline necessitated large amounts funding. Money was needed for bribes and ground transportation as well as ship tickets, personal necessities and food. Naturally some fugitives had enough money to take care of their own expenses. Nazi Henrich Muller, for example, arrived in Rome with enough American currency to sustain him for years, even after paying for his passage to Latin America. However most Nazis, unlike Muller, arrived in Rome with very little in the way of money. Nazi Adolf Eichmann explained that it was conceivable for Nazi fugitives to leave their families behind, because few Nazis

³²Sereny, 315-316.

had accumulated large sums of money.³³ This is illustrated in Stangl's account of his journey when he explains that Hudal gave him money, because he had little left. Individual monastery or convent funds as well as *Anima* resources could have been used in the Ratline, but there were only three sources of funds both directly related to the Ratline that also had the large monetary resources needed to finance the Ratline: the Vatican, the Nazi treasure and the U. S. Government.

The Vatican did have funds available to aid refugees. Monsignor Bayer, at that time was the Rome director of *Caritas Internationalis*, told Gene Sereny, "The Pope did provide money for this [refugee aid], in dribblets sometimes, but it did come."³⁴ Reference has already been made to Montini putting Hudal in contact with *Caritas Internationalis* whose membership organizations included 900 Catholic Charities and 1,000 caring centers. Certainly funds from this organization could have found their way into Bishop Hudal's hands or those of other patrons of the Ratline. Of course, the Vatican had other important resources besides money. A confidential airgram from the Office of Myron Taylor provides an interesting example. This letter pertains to "a quantity of merchandise" stored in Argentina and "destined for the charitable works of the

³³Farago, 327.

³⁴Sereny, 315.

holy Father in aid of war victims."³⁵ The Spanish Government had given the Vatican use of a warship in order to transport this merchandise from Argentina to Europe. The Vatican requested Allied forces not to restrain navigation or interfere (or try and control) the shipment in any way. In conclusion the letter reminds the American officials that Britain has granted its permission for these conditions to be met. What better way to transport war criminals to Argentina, than on a ship that is making a trip from Europe to Argentina and back again, will not be boarded by Allied officials, and has free navigation during the entire course of its voyage? Finally, the Vatican also had organizations such as The Knights of Malta (SMOM), a legendary Vatican order dating back to the Crusades when they were the military arm of the Catholic Church.³⁶ Today, as in 1945, SMOM is comprised of rich or titled persons who generally share a reactionary world view. Peron, as already mentioned, was a member as well as Reinhard Gehlen, Hitler's top anti-Soviet spy who was later put on the payroll of the CIA, and Myron Taylor, President Roosevelt's Personal Representative to the Vatican. After the war the Catholic elite, put their vast resources into the Ratline. SMOM members, in late 1940, aided some of the Nazis smuggled on Bishop Hudal's portion of the Ratline.³⁷ It also arranged

³⁵See letter from Harold Tittmann to the Secretary of State in Washington of 10/20/45, USNA, Myron Taylor Papers, Box 811.11.

³⁶Lee, "Mother Jones," July 1983, p. 22.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

for the printing of 2,000 SMOM passports, many of which were used for Nazis.³⁸

Reputed Nazi wealth that was never located after the war is another possible source of funds. Some doubt that this "Nazi treasure" even existed, but Oswald Pohl of the Main Security Office of the Third Reich testified that his office had received the following sums from concentration camps at Auschwitz and Lublin:

Gold and foreign currencies valued at RM 178,745,960.59
German currency amounting to RM 4,500,000
Diamonds and jewelry valued at RM 43,000,000
Precious metals valued at RM 9,000,000³⁹

Nazis accumulated such wealth primarily from victims of the concentration camps. Not only were all the prisoner's valuables confiscated, but even removing gold fillings from those executed added to the Nazi treasure. Jews were also known to pay ransom to the SS to get other Jewish victims released. Another addition to the Nazi treasure was a Nazi counterfeiting ring, called Operation Bernhard, which counterfeited British pounds.

Bishop Hudal is linked to the Nazi treasure through his part in the escape of SS Hauptsturmbahnführer Rajakowitsch as was described earlier. Rajakowitsch was one of the few Nazi officers who had power of attorney over the Swiss bank accounts in which the Nazis kept their holdings. In 1963

³⁸Lernoux, 288.

³⁹Farago, 195.

Hudal was mentioned, by an Austrian investigator, in a Graz newspaper.

The suspicion long held by the authorities is now raised publicly for the first time. Valuables of gruesome origin, and worth millions, have vanished without a trace. Other millions of mysterious origin showed up in the possession of former leaders of the Nazi Party and the SS Where is the blood-soaked treasure of the SS? Unless Bishop Hudal is willing to shed light on the sources of his funds, it will not be possible in the future to suppress the suspicion that the SS treasure, or a substantial part of it, had wound up in his hands and had been used by him in aiding the escape and rehabilitation of the Nazi fugitives,⁴⁰

and even more explicitly,

The bulk of the money the bishop [Hudal] needed was placed at his disposal by an obscure benefactor in Switzerland. He was in fact a financier named Friedrich "Freddy" Merser, partner of Friedrich Schwend in Operation Bernhard. The money came from the hoard Schwend had amassed in Swiss accounts from the revenue produced by the exchange of the counterfeit [British] pounds for hard currencies.⁴¹

Friedrich Schwend is identified in a US Government Covert Action Information Bulletin as an important figure in setting up the Vatican's SS escape route.⁴² While Schwend was playing his crucial role in setting up the Ratline he was also working for American Intelligence.⁴³ Friedrich Schwend's dual participation in U. S. Intelligence and the

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 197.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 198.

⁴²Covert Action Information Bulletin 25 (Washington D. C.: Covert Actions, Winter 1986) p. 11.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 11.

Ratline raises the question of the role of the U. S. in the Ratline.

The Third Financier: The U. S. Government

The most telling evidence of direct U. S. involvement in the Ratline is found in a 1983 Department of Justice report on Klaus Barbie. In the summer of 1947, the same summer that the La Vista Report was reviewed by U. S. Government officials, the Chief of American Intelligence requested that connections be made with an organization in Europe to move "desirable" persons out of Europe occasionally in lieu of complying with Soviet requests that these persons be returned to Soviet custody.⁴⁴ Through the Vatican connections of Father Stefano Krunsolav Dragonovic, Croatian Displaced Persons Resettlement Chief of the Vatican, a tentative agreement was reached to assist in this operation.⁴⁵ The agreement was one of simple reciprocity: U. S. agents assisted persons of interest to Father Dragonovic in leaving Germany and, in turn, Father Dragonovic assisted these agents in obtaining the necessary visas for persons of interest to the U. S. Command.⁴⁶ So, at the cost of approximately \$1,000 per adult the 430th CIC (Army Counter-Intelligence Corps) transferred prospective

⁴⁴Allan R. Ryan, *Klaus Barbie and the United States Government* (Maryland: University Publications of America, 1983), p. 465.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 471.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 471.

evacuees to Italy where they were supplied with exit visas and other documents by the Ratline.⁴⁷

Dragonovic and U. S. officials at least as high as the director of U. S. Army intelligence in Europe were well aware that some of the passengers on the Ratline were fugitive war criminals.⁴⁸ In the conclusion of a Department of Justice report on Klaus Barbie, its author, Allen Ryan states,

As the discussion of the Ratline's operation makes clear, the 430th CIC and its parent command, G-2 United States Forces Austria (USFA), were operating on the edge of the law, if not over it: false documentation was obtained surreptitiously, information was withheld from United States agencies controlling travel, funds were transferred in unorthodox and perhaps illegal ways, and knowledge of the entire procedure was intentionally restricted to the persons actually involved in it.

The use of the Ratline for informants and defectors raises troubling questions of ethical and legal conduct by relying on the intercession of a foreign national whose own background and interests were suspect, by concealing information from the United States agencies, and by possibly violating lawful regulations on travel, currency and documentation, the army did not act responsibly.⁴⁹

In 1986 Ryan's report was referred to as a whitewash by a government-printed Covert Action Information bulletin,⁵⁰ implying that U. S. involvement in the Ratline was even greater than reported by the Department of Justice.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 473.

⁴⁸Simpson, 194.

⁴⁹Ryan, 72.

⁵⁰Covert Action, 10.

The U. S./Ratline Connection: Fr. Dragonovic

The man integral to U. S. utilization of the Ratline, Father Krunsolav Stefano Dragonovic, was another prominent figure in the administration of the Ratline. In 1941 while teaching Theology at the University of Zagreb, he was serving, under Ante Pavelic, the fascist Leader of Croatia, as a senior official of the committee dealing with the forced conversion of Serbs to Catholicism. Dragonovic arrived in Rome as Vatican representative for Pavelic's terrorist, Croatian party. It was from this position that he became Secretary of the Croatian Institute of San Girolamo in Rome which under his direction became the Croatian branch of the Ratline. Incidentally, Pavelic later escaped down the Ratline with Dragonovic's help.⁵¹ It was Hudal who gave Father Dragonovic the necessary introduction to the International Red Cross and other officials who, for a bribe, could smooth the fugitive's path.⁵² Members of Dragonovic's institute included Monsignor Juraj Magjerec, Father Dominik Mankci and his assistant Vitomir Naletilic. They were officially recognized as the Croatian Committee of the Pontifical Welfare Commission.

Like Hudal's Austrian Committee, the Croatian Committee sent agents to visit camps where Nazi war criminals were hiding. By the time the United States had contacted Dragonovic, he had already set up several clandestine

⁵¹Aarons and Loftus, 77.

⁵²Covert Action, 10.

evacuation channels to the various South American countries.⁵³ Once war criminals arrived in Rome, Dragonovic placed them in safe havens, secured residence permits from the Italian police, permits for visas from the Italian Foreign Office and transportation aid from the Chief of the Eligibility Office of the IRC in Rome.⁵⁴ Dragonovic also arranged travel permits from Rome to Genoa or Naples, and notified his contacts in foreign lands about the planned arrivals of escapees.⁵⁵ The operation expanded and soon Dragonovic was able to have "refugees" escorted from Austria to Genoa where they departed Europe for South America. Dragonovic is described as a "known fascist and war criminal,"⁵⁶ yet the Vatican still appointed him to head the Croatian Committee for refugees even though it was common knowledge that war criminals, like Pavelic, could be hiding among legitimate refugees.

Rebuttals of Vatican Responses to Allegations

Vatican decisions, such as placing men like Dragonovic and Hudal in charge of the refugee committees that catered to refugees from highly pro-Nazi countries, have not gone unnoticed. Before the declassification of the La Vista report only government documents existed on the nature of the Ratline. After the declassification of the La Vista report, a few additional sources of information on the

⁵³Ryan, 465.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 465.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 466.

⁵⁶Simpson, 194.

Vatican's participation in the Ratline began to emerge. In the concluding pages of *Unholy Trinity* Aarons and Loftus state,

What the Vatican did after World War II was a crime. The Ratline was intentionally created to aid and abet the escape of wanted Nazi war criminals the Vatican knew they were sheltering Nazis [the] Vatican's top leaders authorized and directed the smuggling of fugitive war criminals The Ratline did not exist to rescue the innocent, only the guilty. The innocent had no need of false identities.⁵⁷

The Vatican has put forward many arguments contesting accusations of its involvement in the Ratline. Current Vatican historian Father Robert Graham, S. J. has publicly insisted on several occasions that Bishop Hudal had no influence whatsoever at the Vatican. He implies that Hudal was far removed from Vatican politics. This is simply not true as evidence of Hudal's official positions shows. Hudal had a relatively high place in Vatican circles, not to mention his personal friendship with three different popes. American representative to the Vatican, Harold Tittmann was aware of both Hudal's Nazi affinities and his influence. On December 7, 1945, in a letter from the Office of the Personal Representative of President Roosevelt, Tittmann refers warily to Hudal:

Incidentally, I am not at all certain that I trust Bishop Hudal . . . His reputation when we were in the Vatican City was not too good from an Allied point of view. He is, however, rector of the Teutonic College of *Santa Maria dell'Anima*, Rome

⁵⁷Aarons and Loftus, 282-283.

and has several official positions in the Vatican organization.⁵⁸

As Aarons and Loftus note, "Hudal was known for his Nazi affinities long before 1945, yet retained his influential position long after he was publicly exposed."⁵⁹ Father Graham also insists that "pro-Nazi Austrian Bishop Monsignor Alois Hudler [Hudal] could not have helped Priebke at the time he said because he had been banned from the Vatican two years before."⁶⁰ This must be erroneous since Priebke entered Argentina in 1948, while Hudal did not relinquish his duties at the *Anima* until 1952.

In 1992, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls argued that the Vatican could not have been involved in the Ratline, because it was under the surveillance of Allied authorities.⁶¹ This is hardly convincing, however, since we now know that American and Allied Authorities were collaborating with and benefiting from the Ratline. As John Loftus points out, "the entire Nazi government of German-occupied Byelorussia was smuggled into the U. S. by American officials at war's end. The FBI, Army Intelligence and the State Department recruited them for intelligence purposes."⁶² On a May 1994 telecast of *Primetime Live* Loftus estimated that as late as 1982 three hundred of these

⁵⁸See letter from Tittmann to the Honorable Samuel Reber of 12/1/54, USNA, Myron Taylor Papers, Box 123.

⁵⁹Aarons and Loftus, 282-283.

⁶⁰Paul Holmes, "Italy-Nazi," *Reuter News Service--Western Europe*, May 10, 1994.

⁶¹"Vatican Denies It Helped Nazi War Criminals," *Catholic News Service*, February 20, 1992.

⁶²D. Malas, *Justice Delayed*, (Toronto: Summerhill, 1987) p. 146.

Nazis were still living in the United States. In 1978 the General Accounting Offices of the United States Congress reported that the CIA sought payment during the course of the previous fiscal year for at least twenty-two ex-Nazis. "Gustav Hilger--Hitler's deputy foreign minister and liaison with the Special Task Force which murdered 1.4 million Soviet Jews on the Eastern Front--was brought to America after the War, where the CIA and the State Department paid him as a consultant on Soviet affairs."⁶³ In sum, because numerous war criminals exited Europe via the Ratline with American knowledge and approval, American "surveillance" can hardly have been an obstacle to Vatican involvement.

In another point raised in its own defense the Vatican has repeatedly claimed that *Caritas Internationalis* is not an official organization of the Vatican. While this is formally true--*Caritas* was not and is not found on the official list of Vatican charity organizations, it is nonetheless closely associated with the Vatican. The Catholic Periodical *Origins*, for example, describes *Caritas Internationalis* as "the Church's umbrella agency for coordinating the foreign aid and relief efforts of national Catholic charities agencies around the world."⁶⁴ Finally, the Vatican insists that it did not have the money to finance the Ratline. The Vatican as discussed did have available money and other resources at its disposal. So, it

⁶³*Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁴Letter to the Editor, *Origins*, September 16, 1979, behind cover page.

could have operated with Vatican approval, even without Vatican funding.

One sure way for the Vatican to prove its innocence, of course, would be to open its archives to investigators and historical researchers. Vatican officials might at least authorize a limited number of persons to enter the archives under controlled conditions. However, on numerous occasions investigators including Jewish organizations, and Nazi hunters like Simon Weisenthal have requested and been denied access to Vatican Archives to research this question.⁶⁵ The Vatican doesn't feel inclined to prove its innocence even though, in every case in which evidence such as the stories of captured Nazi war criminals, letters of Allied officials, or United States Government documents appear, the clergy that administered aid through the Ratline have always been identified as representatives of the Vatican--a state of affairs that makes the Church's refusal to open its archives even more suspect.

Why Were Catholic Clergy Involved in the Ratline?

Leaving aside, for the moment, the facts regarding Church participation in the Ratline, let us turn to the all-important question of motivation: Why would the Church be

⁶⁵In light of the recent statement by Erik Priebke referring to the Vatican as his means of escape, numerous Jewish agencies have requested the Vatican to open their archives and in response to a request that I personally made, Fr. Metzler, the Vatican archivist, wrote me on 13 September 1994 to inform me that these archives were not open to historical researchers.

involved in the Ratline? Briefly stated the ideology of the Vatican opposed Communism at any cost and more generally had opposed every form of humanism, secularism, liberalism, nationalism, and democracy since the French Revolution. This ideological hostility to the modern Western world very closely parallels that of fascism. The Church was obsessed with fear that Communism would spread throughout Europe and, more importantly, throughout the Third World where the Church had vast interests to protect. Since the Nazis opposed Communism and also defended a mythical moral community corrupted by "materialism" and "individualism", the clergy, in the name of an idealized past, looked towards the Nazis as a bulwark against further "decline". This was the background of Ratline. The clergy involved in the Ratline, if indeed as they were acting as independent individuals, were acting, nevertheless, in a fashion that followed the example set by the Vatican repeatedly since the Reformation. To substantiate these harsh remarks it is useful to review the similarities between fascist and Catholic ideology and the historical relationship between the Nazis and the Vatican that together culminated in the Ratline.

Church Similarities to Fascism

As defined by Benito Mussolini, Fascism "is opposed to classical Liberalism, which arose from the necessity of reacting against absolutism, and which brought its

historical purpose to an end when the State was transformed into the conscience and will of the people,"⁶⁶ and it "is opposed to Socialism, which confines the movement of history within the class struggle and ignores the unity of classes established in one economic and moral reality in the State"⁶⁷ Catholicism also opposed liberalism and Socialism as stated in Wehler's, *The German Empire*, ". . . orthodox Catholicism ranged itself implacably against liberalism, [and] socialism"⁶⁸ The Catholic Church associated liberalism with atheism,⁶⁹ thus making it impossible to reconcile Catholicism and liberalism.⁷⁰ Fascism also opposed materialism and modernism. Likewise, the Catholic subculture rejects the immorality associated with the effects of philosophic materialism and is hostile to modernist movements.⁷¹ Many popes since the mid-nineteenth century have reinforced the anti-modernist character of Roman Catholicism.⁷² After Pius X became pope in 1903, the Vatican began a worldwide crackdown on modernism which lasted until the aftermath of Vatican II.⁷³

⁶⁶Oakshott, *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe* (New York: Cambridge, 1950), p. 166.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 166.

⁶⁸Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire 1871-1918* (Dover: Berg, 1985), p. 116.

⁶⁹Gunter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw/Hill, 1964), 18.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 107.

⁷¹Paula M. Kane, *Separatism and Subculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1994), p. 319.

⁷²Oakeshott, 117.

⁷³Lerneux, 170.

The Church, like fascism, displayed anti-Semitic tendencies. All Catholic diocesan publications in Germany, except the *Berlin See*, carried anti-Semitic propaganda.⁷⁴ Guenter Lewy feels that, "the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward National Socialist anti-Semitism must be seen in the context of the still partially unresolved 2,000-year-old conflict between Church and Synagogue."⁷⁵ He concludes, "The Pope and his advisors-influenced by the long tradition of moderate anti-Semitism so widely accepted in Vatican circles did not view the plight of the Jews with a real sense of urgency and moral outrage."⁷⁶ Finally, the lack of protest by the Church during World War II is a further example of Catholic anti-Semitism. The Pope justified his lack of comment over the massacre of the Jews by resorting to the fact that the Vatican had to remain neutral, but it had violated this policy in 1940 when it expressed its concern over the German violation of the neutrality of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.⁷⁷

Opposition to Communism is the final and most important similarity between Catholic and Fascist ideology. The Fascist conception of life ". . . makes Fascism the precise negation of that doctrine which formed the basis of the so-called Scientific or Marxian Socialism,"⁷⁸ and it does not ". . . vainly seek, like Bolshevism, to expel religion from

⁷⁴Stevenson, 233.

⁷⁵Lewy, 268.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 305.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 305.

⁷⁸Oakeshott, 171.

the minds of men"79 The fact that Fascism, unlike Communism, was not atheist in character encouraged the support of the Vatican; "the Roman Curia also had another reason for continuing to support the Fascist regime: its supposed determination to stamp out international Communism"80 The Catholic church was adamant about its anti-Communist stance. *America*, a Catholic magazine, edited at the time by the Vatican historian Robert Graham S. J. stated in 1949, "The attack on God and God's rights over men is systematic, unremitting and diabolically clever. It is a campaign dictated by the very nature of the false religion of Marxism."81 As for Bolshevism, Cardinal Faulhaber stated "Horrrifying is the picture of Bolshevism"82 Thus it can be said of Catholicism and Fascism that they were both against modernism, materialism, Liberalism, Socialism, Marxism and the Jewish community. Fulton J. Sheen of the Catholic University of America in Washington D. C. expressed the similarity: "If by fascism is meant anti-communism and dislike of a system which suppresses the liberties [of the individual], then the Church is fascist, but so is every American who loves the democratic way of life."83 These fascist tendencies of the

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 178.

⁸⁰Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience* (New York: Basic, 1972), p. 188.

⁸¹"World War Against God," *America*, February 26, 1949.

⁸²Gordon Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars A Study in Social Control* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 1962), p. 114.

⁸³F. J. Sheen, "Politics and Religion," *Vital Speeches*, May 1, 1946, p. 439.

Catholic Church in part, prompted the Vatican to sign a *Concordat* with Hitler.

The *Kulturkampf* and How it Led to the Nazi *Concordat*

Germany was very important to the Vatican, because through it ran the division between Protestant northern Europe and Catholic southern Europe. The political involvement of the Vatican with Nazism is deeply rooted in the experience of the *Kulturkampf* against the Church conducted in 1871 by Bismark, the Protestant Prussian Chancellor of the new German empire. During the *Kulturkampf* the German Government took over the appointment of all school inspectors and forbade all members of religious orders to teach in schools, the rights of Catholic Bishops to exercise ecclesiastical discipline were limited and the clauses of the Prussian Constitution which safeguarded the rights of the churches were drastically changed. During this time the Catholics were attacked as subservient to Rome and in league with the Catholic countries, that is Austria, France and Poland. According to Guenter Lewy the traumatic effects of this *Kulturkampf* meant that many Catholics regarded the continuation of state subsidies to the Church and the protection of Catholic schools as of paramount importance. The Vatican especially valued its position in the educational system, because it was from here that it could instill its ideology in the German people. Fear that the rights taken away from the Church during the *Kulturkampf*

might be taken again was instrumental to the decision of the Church to support National Socialism.

Before the Nazis, or National Socialists, took control of Germany in 1933 the Church was an adamant opponent of National Socialism. In 1930 Catholics were forbidden to belong to the Nazi party, members of the Nazi party would not be allowed to attend funerals or other Church functions in group formation and a Catholic acknowledging his adherence to the teachings of the Nazi party could not be admitted to the sacraments (an integral part of Catholic worship).⁸⁴ These sentiments would change shortly after the Reichstag elections of July 1932, when the National Socialists became the largest single party in the Reichstag. At this time the Vatican became anxious to establish a working relationship with the party that would obviously control the Reichstag, and thus Germany for the coming era, so it formed a *Concordat* with Hitler. The following are some of the premises established for the Church/Nazi relationship in the *Concordat*:

1. Guarantee of Church property
2. Guarantee of religious instruction in schools
3. Catholic youth organizations could exist
4. Clergy would refrain from political activity
5. Church taxes and subsidies from the state continued
6. Church recognized Nazis as the rulers of Germany

⁸⁴Lewy, 8.

Two specific reasons are given for establishing the *Concordat*: to avoid another *Kulturkampf*⁸⁵ and to use the Nazis as an important bulwark against atheistic Communism.⁸⁶ Therefore, even though the Vatican opposed certain aspects of National Socialism, it did have some similarities to the fascist regime, like anti-Communism, and it also had a vested interest in cooperating with the regime.

Hitler's Broken Promises and Continued Vatican Collaboration

Between the years of 1933 and 1945 Hitler continually breached the terms of the *Concordat*. A number of Catholic schools were closed when private schools were abolished, and members of religious orders were no longer allowed to teach. The Nazis also abolished public confessional schools,⁸⁷ and religious teaching in public schools was often countered by Nazi teachers. Catholic youth groups were also eliminated by the Hitler Youth.⁸⁸ Article four of the *Concordat* guaranteed that the bishops could issue and publish freely ordinances, pastoral letters and other enactments for the spiritual guidance of the faithful. In 1934 the Catholic Church in Germany had 435 periodicals, by 1943 the number was down to seven due to Nazi censorship.⁸⁹ The list of infractions goes on, but surprisingly, the Vatican did not protest against these infractions. Instead, the Church

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 quoted from Gildis Englehard, *Abt Schachleiter der Deutsche Kampfer* (Munich, 1941), pp. 26-33.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 143&148.

unabashedly supported the Nazi regime, and the Vatican continued to allow the clergy constantly to defend popular support for German troops in pro-Nazi language. Most scandalously, when the Pope was asked by Dr. Edoardo Senatru, the correspondent of *L'Osservatore Romano* in Berlin, to protest the extermination of the Jews, he flatly refused.⁹⁰ By these examples the Vatican signified to the German clergy that Nazism was acceptable; these examples illustrated that the sacrifice of human lives for the protection of Church interests was permissible.

The fact that the Vatican continued to support the Nazi party instead of reacting against the infractions of the *Concordat* is important. The pope, of course, was concerned with the fate of the thousands of Catholics in the Reich.⁹¹ The *Concordat* was established partially to protect those rights the Church lost during the *Kulturkampf* and partially due to the anti-Communist stance of the Nazis. However, Hitler waged another *Kulturkampf* against the Church through his infractions of the *Concordat*. Thus, the Vatican continued its support of Hitler due to its anti-Communism. Hitler stated, "The Catholic Church should not deceive herself: if National Socialism does not succeed in defeating Bolshevism, then Church and Christianity in Europe too are finished. Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 303-304.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 91.

Church as much as of Fascism."⁹² The one bond that linked the Church to the Nazi party throughout the entire war and even at its conclusion was its adamant dislike of Communism. The traits, such as anti-Communism, shared between fascism and Catholicism made it plausible for the Church to form a *Concordat* with Hitler as well as Mussolini in Italy and Franco in France.

After the war ended the Pope unabashedly condemned National Socialism . . . but the fascist sympathies instilled in the clergy by Vatican policy, contributed to the tragedy of the Ratline. These Fascist attributes of the Catholic Church, reinforced by pro-Nazi examples set by the Vatican, prompted individual clergy to aid Nazi war criminals. As stated by historian Henry Caldwell, "Many in the Italian Catholic Church (Bishop Alois Hudal who ran a postwar underground railroad for Nazis from Italy to South America, for example) were willing to make excuses for Nazis . . . fascism seemed to be a powerful and, therefore, acceptable weapon against Godless Marxism."⁹³ The fact that several individual priests and clergy members were involved in the Ratline is testimony that they felt morally obligated to aid these fascist criminals. The Vatican is the organization that taught its clergy to support the Nazis, because the Nazis were supposedly far better than the

⁹²*Ibid.*, 207 quoted from Faulhaber's report on the meeting between himself and Hitler composed on November 5, 1936; Diocesan Archives Linburg, 561/2 C.

⁹³Henry Caldwell, *Wanted! The Search for Nazis in America* (New York: Quadrangle, 1977), p. 101-102.

atheist Communists. The Vatican attracted those possessing an anti-Communist ideology and instilled the fear of a Bolshevik "devil" in their disciples. It is no wonder that the clergy, in their fear of atheistic Communism and their allegiance to many Fascist values, continued to support the Nazis even after the war.

The Results of the Ratline: An Unholy Alliance

The Ratline produced an informal covert agreement was formed between the United States, the Vatican and Argentina; three unlikely partners linked by their virulent distrust of Communism. Even today the effects of their activities are being felt. The fascist traditions of war criminals are fostered wherever they settle. Organizations formed by these people have, "according to FBI investigations . . . been responsible for an airplane hijacking, bombings, extortion, [and] numerous murders . . . over the course of the last two decades."⁹⁴ The majority of the Nazi war criminals escaping via the Ratline ended their journey in Argentina where, at this very minute, Nazi ideology is still used to persecute Jewish victims. Today, numerous files exist containing the governmental paperwork on the refugees who entered Argentina after World War II. These files survive as one of three sources of documentary evidence on escapees utilizing the Ratline. One of the remaining two sources of travel documentation is closed in the Vatican

⁹⁴Simpson, 198.

archives and the other is found within the records of the International Red Cross, which also denies researchers access to records from this time period. The Argentinean files were censored until their declassification by the Argentinean Government in 1992. Researchers are currently searching these documents to ascertain exact information about those who reached Latin America by means of the Ratline. Two terrorist bombings have occurred with respect to these files. In March 1992, a car bomb destroyed the Israeli embassy six weeks after the disclosures of the files. Police believed "that the suspected car bomb was a revenge attack after disclosures in the previously classified police files about Nazi war criminals who lived in Argentina after the second world war."⁹⁵ In only one day, however, these suspicions were dismissed. Western diplomats had debris and other material immediately removed from the site, ostensibly because they felt Argentina didn't have the ability to effectively investigate the bombing.⁹⁶ No arrests have been made as of 1994.⁹⁷ The second bombing was a mirror image of the first--another car bomb using the same type of explosives destroyed an Argentine Jewish center in July of 1994 (only two months after Italy had ordered the

⁹⁵Gabriella Gamini, "10 Killed in Embassy Blast," *The Times*, March 18, 1992.

⁹⁶"14 to 20 Dead in Embassy Blast," *New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

⁹⁷"Jewish Leaders Fear 100 Dead in Bomb Blast," *Toronto Star*, July 23, 1994.

extradition of Nazi Erik Priebke⁹⁸). This center was home to the files that had been opened just prior to the 1992 bombing. The bomb went off at the time scheduled for researchers to meet in order to analyze the files.⁹⁹ Neo-Nazis were initially suspected to again be dismissed as suspects after only one day, and again the United States removed all debris¹⁰⁰ and brought it to the States for forensic examination. A Lexis/Nexis search conducted for this paper, found no further information about the bombing. Suspicions of a cover-up are only Natural.

Vatican responsibility for the Ratline is undeniable, and the participation of the United States in its operations has been confirmed by numerous Department of Justice Documents. Apparently, the only option left for the guilty partners is damage control and a cover-up. One day when the holocaust is forgotten and all the Nazi war criminals are finally dead (Priebke is ill and in his eighties) the Vatican might open their archives and the U. S. Government might declassify their documents, but justice for those still living and those who died during the war will never be served.

⁹⁸Priebke's extradition request came shortly after *Primetime Live* exposed his whereabouts in May of 1994. Incidentally, I called Erik Priebke in Baralochi, Argentina on September 26, 1994 and found him sleeping in his residence. A Lexis/Nexis search of world newspaper articles has found no subsequent articles on Priebke. Apparently, the extradition request has been silently dropped, and Priebke isn't talking.

⁹⁹*New York Times*, July 21, 1994.

¹⁰⁰Jorge A. Banales, "U. S. Probes Buenos Aires Bombing," *United Press International 1994-Washington News*, August 1, 1994.

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