

A Brief Note On the Significance of the “Graham Archives”

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[My thanks to Mr. Gary Krupp, President of the Pave the Way Foundation, to his board members, and to all who have made this symposium possible on the pontificate of Pope Pius XII. It is my intention to offer a brief note for these proceedings on the significance of the so-called “Graham Archives” for its appreciation of the relationship of Pope Pius XII to the Jews of Europe during the war years of 1939-1945. The following report was occasioned by an invitation extended to me by the Jesuit archivist of the California Province of the Society of Jesus, Thomas Marshall, SJ. Brother Marshall had taken charge of the collection of papers assembled by Fr. Robert Graham, SJ, who had been seconded to the Vatican Secretariat of State in the early 1960s for the purpose of gathering materials relevant to the relations of Pope Pius XII with the Jewish communities of Europe during the second world war. These same materials were sent to the California archives of the Jesuit Fathers when Fr. Graham was felled by illness, resulting in his death in 1997. It was in 1998 that I was privileged to spend some time intensely reviewing the contents of the archives and composing field notes on their relevance to a larger study on Pope Pius XII and the Jews. The brief note which follows attempts only to point out the kinds of materials and sources found in the Graham papers and to propose new avenues for continued research into the vital questions of this symposium.]

Introduction

Without any doubt, the most essential work in preparing to answer questions regarding the meaning of an historical person or event is to establish the historical record accurately. In trying to understand the relationship of Pope Pius XII to the Jewish communities of Europe during the Second World War, considerable efforts have been made already to open the existing resources of various institutions connected with either the Allied or Axis governments of 1939-1945, the Holy See’s own archives and various other religious institutions, particularly those found in the city of Rome. Very helpful bibliographies can be found which detail the extent of materials now available to assist historians and theologians in approaching questions of the relationship of the Catholic Church to other bodies during the war years, and in particular, of the

relationship of Pope Pius XII to specific Jewish communities across Europe during this same time span.

Some limitations are also in evidence regarding the use of these same resources. Very typically, governments and other institutions reserve the right to restrict access to their most sensitive information for periods of up to 70 years *post temporem*. In the case of resources for an examination of the relationship of Pope Pius XII with the Jews of Europe from 1939-1945, there can be no more urgent task for historians and archivists than to continue to cooperate with each other in the slow and careful disclosures of data which will eventually establish the historical record accurately. To date, the three major categories of archives which seem to bear most urgently on the questions addressed by this symposium are diocesan and Vatican, European governments (especially leadership records for Allied and Axis regimes) and religious orders, most especially those of Rome, Germany and France in the period in question. Many of these collections remain in some early stage of accession of materials which run into the millions of documents, therefore making the attempt to establish the historical record through them still a preliminary one today.

At the same time, some of what has been found and analyzed can be said to offer certain points of departure from which working trajectories might be fashioned helpful to the work of this symposium. Chief among these is an initial distinction to be made between an analysis of the political governance and *real politik*, so to speak, of Pope Pius XII in the Fascist periods of the 20th century on the one hand, and his efforts towards saving the Jews of Europe, on the other. The temptation to conflate these two topics must be resisted, both because the historical record has not produced any evidence to support this idea, but even more forcefully, because what has

begun to surface cautions strongly against it. Key questions, for example, about how Pope Pius XII dealt with the central Fascist technique of “forced choice” diplomacy as it affected all of his decisions are yet to be fully explored; but the analysis so far calls into question the moral accusation that Pope Pius XII in fact was negligent or uncaring about the fate of the Jews of Europe, particularly under the Nazi project. If there is a relationship between these two problems – *real politik* in the face of Fascist techniques of aggression and the saving of Jewish lives threatened by the Nazis – it is likely to be one of great complexity in which the Pope’s moral intentions far overshadowed his diplomatic and political interests as he sought to save human lives. Historians and researchers must be cautioned against rash judgment in the face of growing historical evidence which suggests that the drumbeat of culpability against Pius XII is itself unfounded.

This brief essay will now examine in summary fashion two archival sources by way of illustrating the complexity of the Pacelli papacy in the light of these questions.

The “Graham Archives”

When Fr. Robert Graham, SJ, died in 1997, he left in the custody of the Jesuit provincial archives of California a collection of papers housed in 250 portfolio-sized boxes. In my estimation, Fr. Graham had therein assembled close to 25,000 documents which could be roughly classified as follows: (1) government *demarches*; (2) media reports; (3) eyewitness accounts, taken either by Graham himself or offered in signed format by others; (4) personal interviews; (5) summaries of books and other studies on the papacy of Pius XII and (6) classified and unclassified military and diplomatic reports from field officers in embassies and chancelleries from across Europe. Graham’s sorting of materials was done partially in

chronological format and partially by subject. The entire collection was only in an initial stage of assembly and showed signs of incomplete organization throughout. The physical quality of the documents themselves, however, was excellent, including original cables and other testimonies from the war period. In rough terms, the documents of the Graham files were 40 % in Latin; 20% in English; 20% in Italian and 20% in German.

Graham's principal subjects were three in number: (1) the relations of the Vatican to the Jewish community of Rome; (2) secret networks for the saving of Jewish lives, chiefly through religious orders and (3) relations between the Holy See and the episcopacies of other European nations on the question of Jewish protection. Some examples of each of these categories may help to illustrate their relevance. Document identifications given here are taken from Graham's own numbering and filing system.

1. **Examples of Graham archive documents relative to the relations of the Vatican to the Jewish community of Rome.**

- a. **File # 89; Title: Rome's Jews/Germans/Pius XII** – an autobiographical account of Rabbi Zolli's stay within the Vatican during the war, together with corroborative eyewitness accounts of numerous interactions with personnel of the Holy See relative to saving Jewish lives during the war.
- b. **File Unnumbered, untitled** – In a personal interview with her after the events, Graham reports that on October 16, 1943 Principessa Pignatelli Aragona, an Italian noblewoman, stated that she received a phone call from "a friend" within the Jewish ghetto of Rome that the Gestapo had arrived to deport as many Jews as possible to concentration camps in the East. This unnamed woman then said that several thousand Jews had been arrested, despite the early hour of 5: 00 am. The Principessa then telephoned the Pope's personal secretary and was advised to come to the Vatican to make her report. She did so and was received by Pope Pius himself, and asked that he intervene personally in the matter. She reported that he then telephoned to German authorities while in her presence and asked that the arrests and deportations be halted immediately.
- c. **File # 87, untitled** – In a personal interview he had with Prince Pacelli in March of 1968, Graham was told the following. During the war, the expense

of feeding the Jewish population of Rome by the Vatican began to drain its cash reserves. Prince Pacelli went secretly to Pope Pius and told him of the expected shortfall which would bring the food supply program to a halt. The Pope then instructed the prince to prepare to sell Raphael's *Transfiguration* in order to raise cash for this enterprise. The Pope would not consider allowing the program to be halted, but preferred to sell Vatican art lest the Jewish population starve. During the course of preparing the sale, the prince noted that the cash situation of the Vatican improved, so that the Pope decided that the sale need not be conducted immediately. Pope Pius was firm, however, that if the sale needed to be made in order to support the Jewish community, it would be finalized.

- d. **File # 89: Title: Rome's Jews/Germans/Pope Pius XII** – This file contained a secret cipher cablegram directed to the British Foreign Office from the Vatican Secretariat of State, dated October 31, 1943, translated by Sir d'Arcy Osborne, stating that as soon as the Secretariat of State had heard of the arrest of Jews in Rome, Pope Pius sent for the German ambassador and formulated a protest. The same ambassador then took immediate action to assist in halting the deportations with the result that large numbers of Jews were released by the Gestapo in the two days following this date.

2. **Examples of Graham archive documents relative to secret networks for the saving of Jewish lives through religious orders.**

- a. **File: Unnumbered, untitled:** – an account written by Graham and derived from his own interview with Mother Pasqualina of her near arrest by the Gestapo at 2:00 am one night in Rome during the later part of the war, as she attempted to deliver a truck load of goods to a convent “for the needs of the Sisters” as a code word for “the Jews hiding in the convent.” Graham goes on to relate how extensively Mother Pasqualina was involved in efforts to feed the Jews in hiding throughout Rome in the system of convents and religious houses which protected them, providing food specifically at the direction of the Pope.
- b. **File: Eyewitness, untitled** – this file contained a paper delivered by Fr. Pierre Lopinot, OFM, Cap at the *Conference Internationale Extraordinaire Pour Combatre l'Antisemitisme* (Seelisber, 1947) in which he details the efforts of his own network in Rome to save the lives of Jews.
- c. **File # 87, untitled** – an unsigned note about the work of a priest chaplain, Fr. Pierre Lopinot, OFM, Cap at Ferramonti in Southern Italy. Apparently, Fr. Lopinot was assigned to this camp directly by the Holy See. His own account of the matter is contained in the *Analecta Ordinis Fratrorum Minorum*, 60

(1944), 70-75; 61 (1945) 40-47, copies of which in Latin are contained in Graham File # 87. Graham maintains in this file that Fr. Lopinot worked for the release of Jews from this camp at the direction of the Holy See.

3. **Examples of Graham archive documents relative to episcopacies of other European nations and the Holy See on the matter of Jewish protection.**

- a. **File “Slovakia”, titled: “Slovakia”** – an account of an incident in March or April of 1943 with Fr. Tiso, head of government in Slovakia, who was ordered by the Holy See to desist from deportation of Jews lest he be excommunicated (cf. *Acts et Documents du Sainte Siege*, 1, 457 and 9,246). The letter from Rome was presented to Tiso through Bishop Hamvas, auxiliary bishop of Budapest (cf. *Acts et Documents du Sainte Siege*, 8, 458).
- b. **File “W”; titled “Weizacker”** – a long summary by Graham of the contents of cables confiscated from the Vatican after the war by the Allied powers. These were composed by Weizacker as the Reichambassador to the Holy See. Graham states that these cables were the official means by which Pope Pius communicated his protests to the Nazis over their policies and conduct towards Jews and others during the war. Graham’s summaries suggest that there were two complete sets of these cables still in existence: (1) in London and (2) in Bonn, stored in the Political Archives at Auswartge. Graham also prepared a summary of his findings in review of these cables, entitled “Pope Pius XII and Peace in the Last Year of the Third Reich: Recovering the Missing Weizacker Archives.” Graham was sure that these cables would provide corroborating evidence that Pope Pius registered consistent objection to Nazi Jewish policy. As an example, Graham cites an incident in which a young Monsignore Giovanni Battista Montini drafted a response for Pope Pius on November 14, 1944 on behalf of civilians being kept in concentration camps in Germany. According to Graham, this draft then became the basis of Pope Pius’ cable to Weizacker on that same date.
- c. **File # 83, untitled** – A one page, unsigned eyewitness account of an incident between Pope Pius and his priest secretary in the kitchen of the apostolic palace before and after a papal audience on August 2, 1942, following the arrest of Edith Stein. Pope Pius was shown the headlines of the daily paper that declared how the Nazis had rounded up 40,000 Jews in the lowlands in retaliation for the Dutch Catholic bishops’ statement condemning the Nazi project. Upon seeing the headlines, the Pope immediately proposed burning his own similar text of a Nazi condemnation – a document which he himself had prepared and described as “much more critical than the Dutch statement” – but was begged by the priest secretary not to do so. The same secretary asked the Pope to save the document for a later delivery, but the Pope denied this request as well, saying that he was sure that the Nazis were going to invade the Vatican and that they would find the text and retaliate against Jewish lives accordingly. Pope Pius then asked the priest secretary: If the

Nazis would kill 40,000 Jews for a statement by one episcopacy, then surely wouldn't they kill 200,000 for a papal one? The Pope then burned his statement in the stove of the kitchen, ending the conversation.

It goes without saying that the work of authenticating, establishing historical context and credible corroboration is yet to be done for this material. While certain of Graham's files appear to be duplicated in other sources, or even corroborated in Blet, Gumpel or masterfully catalogued in Doino's bibliography of Graham's own writings, many are not and, as such, must be treated as original accounts whose content must be appropriately verified and weighed. Much research lies ahead for dedicated scholars to determine what of Graham's work can help to establish the historical record regarding Pope Pius and the Jews and what must be set aside.

Other Religious Order Archives

Throughout available histories of the occupation of Rome, numerous religious orders are mentioned as having supported the Jews of that city in their desperate plight against Nazi extermination. In the Graham archives alone are found references to Mother Pasqualina's community of religious sisters, the Capuchins, the Jesuits and many others. Often the heroic acts of these men and women are either overlooked in the historical record because of the humility of their subjects who preferred to see their heroism as simply "the right thing to do", or because the extant records of their deeds have been misplaced or lie unread since the war. Now may be the time for a general call to the religious houses of Rome, in particular, to examine their archives for evidence of the saving of Jewish lives during the second world war, most especially in harmony with the efforts of the Holy See to do so.

Prominent among these is the account left by a Brother Robert of Mary Pace, FSC (b. 1911) of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who served as the voice of Radio Vatican from

approximately 1941 until about 1947. Brother Robert was assigned to the office of a then young and intrepid Monsignore Giovanni Battista Montini, who as under-secretary to Pope Pius XII for external affairs, was also charged with running a network of safe houses both for Jews and downed RAF pilots in Rome. Full accounts of these events can be found in the archives of the California province of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, notably in the correspondence and memoirs of Br. Robert.

What is of great significance to our present seminar is the assertion of Br. Robert's that he not only worked for Monsignore Montini, but took his orders from him relative to the safe-keeping of Jews and allied pilots. Found most completely in his unpublished manuscript entitled, "The Beginning of the Adventures of Brother Robert of Mary during the German Occupation of Rome" (1949 ?), Br. Robert relays how when crossing streets in the city of Rome he would be approached by Jewish women who knew of his work and begged, "Father, hide us from the Nazis who will put us on trucks and take us to Germany". Br. Robert managed to save many such people and, again most pertinently for our interests here, did so at the direction of Monsignore Montini who, in turn, reported all activities of this nature to the Pope for final direction and approval. In addition, Br. Robert testifies in his memoirs that he also worked closely with the heads of three other networks doing similar tasks: (1) Monsignore Hugh O'Flaherty, (2) Sir d'Arcy Osbourne and (3) Major Derry of the British Army Corps. On one occasion, Br. Robert reported being arrested by the Gestapo who promptly shot the downed flyers in his company. The Gestapo put Br. Robert on a truck bound for an unknown site. At that moment, he recalled that he was carrying a code book which listed the names of Jews hidden throughout Rome. He then ate the pages of the book, one by one, lest any Jews be arrested due to his own apprehension by the SS.

Conclusion

The importance of religious order archives, most especially those retained by the Jesuits as the “Graham Archives”, in establishing the historical record of the Pope’s efforts to save Jewish lives throughout Europe during the war years cannot be overestimated. What our brief survey of only two such sources has suggested is that numerous networks – some interactive with others – worked desperately for the preservation of Jewish life, quite demonstrably at the direction of Pope Pius XII.

What is equally intriguing is that modern popes from Pius XI through John Paul II have reflected a crescendo of interest and a development of thought about the Jewish people on the part of the papacy as a whole. Seen from this point of view, a reassessment of Popes Pius XI and XII, John XIII -- who as a fearless nuncio in Turkey, saved the lives of 24,000 Jewish children in what would become known as “Operation Baptism” – Paul VI (formerly Monsignore Montini) and then John Paul II may open up an entirely different view of how both the popes themselves and the Church under their leadership have come to a new relationship with the Jewish community today. It is not without significance that with the exception of the all too brief reign of John Paul I, each of the popes since Benedict XV, whose own work to promote world peace was highly significant, through John Paul II were deeply and personally involved in the protection of Jews in one way or another. For, it was during this period that the world witnessed the unspeakable evils of the Holocaust and that the Church found her change of heart in the promulgation of the conciliar document, *Nostra Aetate*, tirelessly implemented by Pope John Paul II.

Today it is Pope Benedict XVI who calls us as Jews and Catholics to dialogue together, abandoning previous models of disputation and to embrace a dialogue of love which leads us to the truth. In light of this invitation, is it not also time for us to conceive of a new form of learning, i.e., where learning is done jointly as we encounter conflicts together ? Is it now possible for us to investigate the most difficult questions we face by sharing our scholarship to reach a mutual understanding, rather than by using it for political advantage ? Might we conceive of joint efforts in our common centers of study, to begin tackling the necessary research and analysis of the questions before us in this symposium ? May our common desire for the blessing of God's holy name be our guide in such efforts.

I thank you for your kind attention.