

**US embassy cable - 01VATICAN4258 (comparison)**

**VATICAN ARCHIVES Q "THE REAL STORY" (comparison)**

**Identifier:** 01VATICAN4258

**Origin:** Embassy Vatican

**Created:** 2001-08-13 11:46:00

**Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL

**Tags:** PREL PHUM KNAR PHUM KNAR VT

**Redacted:** This cable was redacted by Wikileaks. [[Show redacted version](#)] [[Show unredacted version](#)]

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

=== Original (unredacted) version ===

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 004258

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI), EUR/OHI

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 134/01

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/06

TAGS: PREL, PHUM, KNAR, PHUM, KNAR, VT.PREL, VT.

SUBJECT: VATICAN ARCHIVES Q "THE REAL STORY"

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REF: STATE 137397

CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM GEORGE FROWICK, REASON E.O. 12958 (B,D).

1. (C) A/DCM AND POLITICAL ASSISTANT MET WITH JESUIT FATHER PETER GUMPEL AUGUST 10 AT HIS OFFICES IN THE JESUIT CURIA TO DISCUSS THE TECHNICAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN OPENING THE VATICAN ARCHIVES. (NOTE: THIS WAS A PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED MEETING, I.E. BEFORE WE RECEIVED REFTEL. WE NEVERTHELESS DELIVERED SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME SET OF POINTS, FOCUSING ON THE USG'S INTEREST IN PROMOTING A POSITIVE, PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE, AND QUICKLY, AS THE HOLOCAUST GENERATION IS PASSING. END NOTE.) GUMPEL IMMEDIATELY ADVISED THAT THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO THE VATICAN ARCHIVES RELATED TO THE WORLD WAR II ERA WAS SIMPLY AN INTERNAL MATTER OF PROCEDURE AND NOT A POLITICAL ONE. ALTHOUGH LATER HE ADMITTED THAT IT HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A POLITICAL ISSUE THROUGH A DISTORTION OF FACTS RELATED TO THE WORKINGS OF A JEWISH-VATICAN COMMISSION STUDYING PIUS XII'S ROLE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. GUMPEL PROFFERED COPIES OF HIS STATEMENT, WRITTEN WITH AUTHORIZATION FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS WITHIN THE VATICAN HIERARCHY, COUNTERING "FALSE" ASSERTIONS BY UNNAMED MEMBERS

=== Wikileaks (redacted) version ===

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THE "TECHNICAL" PROCESS CONFIDENTIAL

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2. (C) WHEN PRESSED, GUMPEL, WITH SCHOLARLY PRECISION, EXPLAINED THE TECHNICAL PROCEDURES FOR ACCESS TO THE VATICAN ARCHIVES. THE MOST RECENT MATERIAL RELEASED FOR SCHOLARLY SCRUTINY GOES BACK FIVE PONTIFICATES. MATERIAL RELATED TO THE REIGN OF BENEDICT XV (1914-1922) HAS BEEN CLASSIFIED AND CATALOGUED AND IS AVAILABLE TO RESEARCHERS. CLASSIFICATION AND CATALOGUING OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE PONTIFICATE OF PIUS XI (1922-1939) WILL BE COMPLETED IN 2009 AT THE LATEST. GUMPEL SAID HE HOPES

OF THE COMMISSION, AS WELL AS A STATEMENT PREPARED BY CARDINAL WILLIAM KEELER OF BALTIMORE, THE U.S. BISHOPS DELEGATE FOR CATHOLIC-JEWISH AFFAIRS, WHO DID NAME NAMES. HE ASSURED US THAT HE WAS A JUDGE FOR MATERIAL USED IN THE PROCESS TO DECLARE PIUS XII A SAINT AND NOT THE PROMOTER OF THE CAUSE FOR SAINTHOOD.

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END NOTE). WORK TO CLASSIFY AND CATALOGUE MATERIAL RELATED TO POPE PIUS XII (1939-1958) WOULD NORMALLY COMMENCE IN 2009. GUMPEL POINTED OUT THAT FOUR JESUITS HAD BEEN GIVEN ACCESS TO THE LITERALLY MILLIONS OF DOCUMENTS AND HAD SPENT 17 YEARS (1964-1981) SORTING OUT ALL/ALL THE DIPLOMATIC MATERIAL RELATING TO PIUS XII'S ACTIVITY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THESE WERE THE PAPERS PUBLISHED IN THE 12 VOLUMES TO HAVE BEEN REVIEWED BY THE COMMISSION. (COMMENT: IT IS POST'S UNDERSTANDING THAT IT CURRENTLY IS LOGISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO OPEN UP THE VATICAN ARCHIVES RELATED TO PIUS XII'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. GUMPEL SAID IT CONSISTS OF SEVERAL HUNDRED BOXES (THROUGH WHICH THE JESUITS WENT PAPER-BY-PAPER EXTRACTING ALL DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW) AND MILLIONS OF SHEETS OF PAPER. MANY OF THESE ARE PASTORAL DOCUMENTS (LETTERS TO PRIESTS, ETC) THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE HOLOCAUST, BUT WHICH COULD PROVE EMBARRASSING TO LIVING PEOPLE. IT TOOK FOUR HIGHLY  
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MOTIVATED, INTELLIGENT, MULTILINGUAL JESUITS 17 YEARS TO SORT THROUGH AND PUBLISH THE MATERIAL. END COMMENT.) THE VATICAN INSISTS THE OTHER DOCUMENTS WILL BE OPEN TO SCRUTINY ONCE THEY HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AND CATALOGUED AND NOT BEFORE. TWO ARCHIVISTS STAFF THE VATICAN ARCHIVE. GUMPEL ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS INADEQUATE AND THAT HE HAS REQUESTED AN INCREASE IN PERSONNEL PRECISELY TO SPEED US THE PROCESS. GUMPEL INFORMED US THAT THIS ARCHIVAL PROCEDURE HAD BEEN CLEARLY EXPLAINED TO THE SCHOLARS ON THE COMMISSION OVER THE

FOR AN EARLIER COMPLETION DATE. (NOTE. THE PIUS XI DOCUMENTS WILL CONTAIN MATERIAL RELATED TO PIUS XII WHEN, AS CARDINAL EUGENIO PACELLI, HE WAS PIUS XI'S SECRETARY OF STATE Q PM EQUIVALENT - FROM 1930 UNTIL 1939. SIPDIS END NOTE). WORK TO CLASSIFY AND CATALOGUE MATERIAL RELATED TO POPE PIUS XII (1939-1958) WOULD NORMALLY COMMENCE IN 2009. GUMPEL POINTED OUT THAT FOUR JESUITS HAD BEEN GIVEN ACCESS TO THE LITERALLY MILLIONS OF DOCUMENTS AND HAD SPENT 17 YEARS (1964-1981) SORTING OUT ALL/ALL THE DIPLOMATIC MATERIAL RELATING TO PIUS XII'S ACTIVITY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THESE WERE THE PAPERS PUBLISHED IN THE 12 VOLUMES TO HAVE BEEN REVIEWED BY THE COMMISSION. (COMMENT: IT IS POST'S UNDERSTANDING THAT IT CURRENTLY IS LOGISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO OPEN UP THE VATICAN ARCHIVES RELATED TO PIUS XII'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. GUMPEL SAID IT CONSISTS OF SEVERAL HUNDRED BOXES (THROUGH WHICH THE JESUITS WENT PAPER-BY-PAPER EXTRACTING ALL DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW) AND MILLIONS OF SHEETS OF PAPER. MANY OF THESE ARE PASTORAL DOCUMENTS (LETTERS TO PRIESTS, ETC) THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE HOLOCAUST, BUT WHICH COULD PROVE EMBARRASSING TO LIVING PEOPLE. IT TOOK FOUR HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL  
PAGE 04 VATICA 04258 01 OF 02 131205Z MOTIVATED, INTELLIGENT, MULTILINGUAL JESUITS 17 YEARS TO SORT THROUGH AND PUBLISH THE MATERIAL. END COMMENT.) THE VATICAN INSISTS THE OTHER DOCUMENTS WILL BE OPEN TO SCRUTINY ONCE THEY HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AND CATALOGUED AND NOT BEFORE. TWO ARCHIVISTS STAFF THE VATICAN ARCHIVE. GUMPEL ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS INADEQUATE AND THAT HE HAS REQUESTED AN INCREASE IN PERSONNEL PRECISELY TO SPEED US THE PROCESS. GUMPEL INFORMED US THAT THIS ARCHIVAL PROCEDURE HAD BEEN CLEARLY EXPLAINED TO THE SCHOLARS ON THE COMMISSION OVER THE COURSE OF MANY CONVERSATIONS.

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ACRIMONY FROM THE COMMISSION'S WORK  
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3. (C) GUMPEL RECOUNTED AN OCTOBER 2000 MEETING HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO ATTEND WITH MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH-VATICAN COMMISSION STUDYING PIUS XII'S ROLE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THE MEETING WAS TAPE-RECORDED WITH THE CONSENT OF ALL THOSE PRESENT. XXXXXXXXXXXX NONE OF THE COMMISSION MEMBERS HAD READ ALL THE PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS, AND MOST WERE NOT ABLE TO READ THE DOCUMENTS IN THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN AND HAD TO RELY ON TRANSLATED SUMMARIES. GUMPEL NOTED THAT FROM A SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE, THIS SITUATION WAS "LESS THAN IDEAL." THE COMMISSION'S REPORT, WHICH CONSISTED OF 46 COMPLEX QUESTIONS, GUMPEL HAD PREPARED TO ANSWER. HE WORKED

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INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AMAD-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00  
VCE-00 NSAE-00 SNIS-00 NISC-00 DSCC-00 LBA-00 PRM-01 DRL-02 SAS-00 /003W  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 VATICAN 004258  
SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI), EUR/OHI  
FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 134/01  
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UP A SERIES OF HISTORICAL DOSSIERS, INCLUDING PRIMARY DOCUMENTS. XXXXXXXXXXXX THOSE SAME VATICAN OFFICIALS, HE SAID, EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR FR. GUMPEL'S ACUTE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION AND HIS SCIENTIFIC PROFESSIONALISM. GUMPEL MADE IT CLEAR TO A/DCM THAT EVEN POPE JOHN PAUL II IS AWARE OF THE SITUATION.

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I AM A GERMAN, NOT A NAZI

COURSE OF MANY CONVERSATIONS.

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ACRIMONY FROM THE COMMISSION'S WORK  
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FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN  
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INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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UP A SERIES OF HISTORICAL DOSSIERS, INCLUDING PRIMARY

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4. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXX GUMPEL ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT REFERENCES IN THE MEDIA AND IN OTHER COMMENTS TO HIM AS THE "GERMAN JESUIT." GUMPEL TOLD A/DCM THAT HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN VICTIMS OF NAZI PERSECUTION AND SEVERAL HAD BEEN KILLED BY THE NAZIS. HE HIMSELF HAD TO FLEE NAZI GERMANY AS A REFUGEE, FIRST TO FRANCE AND THEN LATER TO HOLLAND. HE RECALLED THAT AT ONE POINT A REPORTER HAD PLANNED TO PRINT AN ASSERTION THAT GUMPEL WAS A NAZI HIMSELF -- SOMETHING GUMPEL SAID WAS LIBELOUS, AND WHICH HE WAS MORE THAN WILLING TO GO TO COURT TO FIGHT.

5. (C) GUMPEL SAID HE WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN THE JEWISH- VATICAN COMMISSION DECIDED TO SUSPEND ITS WORK. XXXXXXXXXXXXX HE CLOSED BY SAYING THAT THE VATICAN WANTS TO LET PASS A PERIOD OF TIME BEFORE REOPENING THIS DISCUSSION. HE SAID THAT THE VATICAN AND HE HIMSELF WERE MORE THAN WILLING TO DISCUSS ANY ANOMALIES OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE 12-VOLUME HISTORY ALREADY PUBLISHED. THEY JUST DIDN'T THINK THAT THE JUST-DISBANDED COMMISSION CONSISTED OF THE RIGHT MIX OF PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO DO SO.  
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DOCUMENTS. YET HE SAID HE WAS SUSPICIOUS THAT THE COMMISSION  
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HAD NO INTENT TO THOROUGHLY EXPLORE THE QUESTIONS SINCE THEY  
ONLY ALLOCATED THREE HOURS TO THEIR ENCOUNTER. MOREOVER,  
AFTER REVIEWING DOSSIERS ON ONLY 12 QUESTIONS, SOME OF THE  
COMMISSION MEMBERS LAUNCHED INTO POLEMICAL ATTACKS ON THE  
HOLY SEE FOR ITS ALLEGED LACK OF COOPERATION. SOME  
COMMISSION MEMBERS LATER MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT A LACK  
OF SUCH ON HIS PART. GUMPEL LAMENTED THE AGGRESSIVE POSITION  
TAKEN TOWARDS HIM PERSONALLY BY SOME MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMISSION AND THE LACK OF PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC COHESION IN  
THE GROUP OF HISTORIANS AS A WHOLE. HE HAS DEPOSITED THE  
TAPES OF THE MEETING WITH THE VATICAN. HIGH LEVEL VATICAN  
OFFICIALS HAVE LISTENED TO THE RECORDINGS AND EXPRESSED  
REGRET AT THE UNSCHOLARLY METHODOLOGY OF SOME OF THE JEWISH  
MEMBERS. THOSE SAME VATICAN OFFICIALS, HE SAID, EXPRESSED  
APPRECIATION FOR FR. GUMPEL'S ACUTE KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
SITUATION AND HIS SCIENTIFIC PROFESSIONALISM. GUMPEL MADE  
IT CLEAR TO A/DCM THAT EVEN POPE JOHN PAUL II IS AWARE OF  
THE SITUATION.

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I AM A GERMAN, NOT A NAZI  
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4. (C) GUMPEL WAS PERSONALLY PAINED BY SOME OF THE AD  
HOMINUM COMMENTARY DIRECTED AT HIM BY JEWISH MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMISSION AND OTHER JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS. HE STRESSED TO  
A/DCM THAT HE HAS REFRAINED FROM CHARACTERIZING THE WORK OF  
CERTAIN COMMISSION MEMBERS "UNTIL NOW" AS A PROFESSIONAL  
COURTESY AND OUT OF RESPECT. HOWEVER, HE WARNED THAT IF  
ATTACKS AND FALSEHOODS CONTINUED, HE WOULD RELEASE THE TAPES  
OF THE MEETINGS. (NOTE: GUMPEL INSINUATED THAT THE RELEASE  
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TO THE TAPES WOULD PROVE TO BE EMBARRASSING FOR SOME OF THE  
COMMISSION MEMBERS, DEMONSTRATING THAT THE COMMISSION ITSELF  
WAS "IN CRISIS" BECAUSE OF CERTAIN MEMBERS' UNPROFESSIONAL  
BEHAVIOR. END NOTE). GUMPEL ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT  
REFERENCES IN THE MEDIA AND IN OTHER COMMENTS TO HIM AS THE  
"GERMAN JESUIT." GUMPEL TOLD A/DCM THAT HIS FAMILY HAD  
BEEN VICTIMS OF NAZI PERSECUTION AND SEVERAL HAD BEEN KILLED  
BY THE NAZIS. HE HIMSELF HAD TO FLEE NAZI GERMANY AS A  
REFUGEE, FIRST TO FRANCE AND THEN LATER TO HOLLAND. HE  
RECALLED THAT AT ONE POINT A REPORTER HAD PLANNED TO PRINT  
AN ASSERTION THAT GUMPEL WAS A NAZI HIMSELF -- SOMETHING  
GUMPEL SAID WAS LIBELOUS, AND WHICH HE WAS MORE THAN WILLING  
TO GO TO COURT TO FIGHT.

5. (C) GUMPEL SAID HE WAS NOT SURPRISED WHEN THE JEWISH-  
VATICAN COMMISSION DECIDED TO SUSPEND ITS WORK. HE CLAIMED  
THAT SOME OF ITS MEMBERS HAD AGENDAS THAT WENT BEYOND THE  
SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION'S MANDATE (TO STUDY THE TWELVE  
VOLUMES). OBJECTIONS ABOUT A LACK OF ACCESS TO THE VATICAN

ARCHIVES OR ABOUT THE VATICAN HAVING SOMETHING TO HIDE ARE,  
IN GUMPEL'S OPINION, A SMOKE SCREEN FOR POLITICAL AGENDAS  
WHICH HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH THE SERIOUS HISTORICAL STUDY  
THAT IS HIS LIFE. HE CLOSED BY SAYING THAT THE VATICAN  
WANTS TO LET PASS A PERIOD OF TIME BEFORE REOPENING THIS  
DISCUSSION. HE SAID THAT THE VATICAN AND HE HIMSELF WERE  
MORE THAN WILLING TO DISCUSS ANY ANOMALIES OR QUESTIONS  
RELATING TO THE 12-VOLUME HISTORY ALREADY PUBLISHED. THEY  
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