History often repeats itself, and if you have lived two lives, as I have done, you have a good chance of seeing the reenactment with your own eyes. Liberation theology, of which not much has been heard for two decades, is back in the news. But what is not being mentioned is its origins. It was not invented by Latin American Catholics. It was developed by the KGB. The man who is now the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, secretly worked for the KGB under the code name “Mikhailov” and spent four decades promoting liberation theology, which we at the top of the Eastern European intelligence community nicknamed Christianized Marxism. Liberation theology has been generally understood to be a marriage of Marxism and Christianity. What has not been understood is that it was not the product of Christians who pursued Communism, but of Communists who pursued Christians. I described the birth of liberation theology in my book Disinformation, co-authored with Professor Ronald Rychlak. Its genesis was part of a highly classified Party/State Disinformation Program, formally approved in 1960 by KGB chairman Aleksandr Shelepin and Politburo member Aleksei Kirichenko, then the second in the party hierarchy after Nikita Khrushchev. In 1971, the KGB sent Kirill — who had just been elevated to the rank of archimandrite — to Geneva as emissary of the Russian Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches. The WCC was, and still is, the largest international religious organization after the Vatican, representing some 550 million Christians of various denominations in 120 countries. Kirill/Mikhailov’s main task was to involve the WCC in spreading the new liberation theology throughout Latin America. In 1975, the KGB was able to infiltrate Kirill into the Central Committee of the WCC — a position he held until he was “elected” patriarch of Russia, in 2009. Not long after he joined the Central Committee, Kirill reported to the KGB: “Now the agenda of the WCC is also our agenda.” During Kirill’s years at the helm of the WCC, liberation theology put down deep roots in Latin America — where the map now has significant patches of red. Russian military ships and bombers are back in Cuba for the first time since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and Russia has also newly sent ships and bombers to Venezuela. Pope John Paul II, who knew the Communist playbook well, was not taken in by the Soviets’ liberation theology. In 1983, his friend and trusted colleague Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), who at that time was head of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, discarded as Marxist the liberation-theology idea that class struggle is fundamental to history. The cardinal called liberation theology a “singular heresy” and blasted it as a “fundamental threat” to the Church. Of course, it was and remains a threat — one deliberately designed to undermine the Church and destabilize the West by subordinating religion to an atheist political ideology for its geopolitical gain. Now names — like Oscar Romero and Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann — not heard since the 1980s, when the Soviet Union was still en vogue, are again making international news. And here we are. The promoters of a KGB-inspired religious ideology, which once embraced violent Marxist
revolution, are now denying its link to Marxism and to the KGB. Each society reflects its own past. Down through the ages, everyone who has sat on the Kremlin throne — autocratic tsar, Communist leader, or democratically elected president — has been preoccupied with controlling all expressions of religion that might impinge on his political ambitions. When Ivan IV — the Terrible — had himself crowned in 1547 as Russia’s first tsar, he also made himself head of the Russian Orthodox Church. Tsarism and Communism may have been swallowed up by the sands of time, but the Kremlin continues this tradition. Throughout its history, Russia has been a samoderzhaviye, a traditional Russian form of totalitarian autocracy in which a feudal lord rules the country and the church with the help of his political police force. The latter, whenever it had a sticky image problem, simply changed its name — from Okhrana to Cheka, to GPU, to OGPU, to NKVD, to NKGB, to MGB, to MVD, to KGB — and pretended it was a brand new organization. Many deceased KGB officers must have been chortling in their graves on New Year’s Eve, 1999, when their old boss, Vladimir Putin, at one time my KGB counterpart, enthroned himself in the Kremlin. During the Cold War, the KGB was a state within a state. Now the KGB — rechristened FSB — is the state itself. According to a study published in the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, by 2003, some 6,000 former KGB officers were running Russia’s federal and local governments. The respected British newspaper the Guardian reports that President Putin has secretly accumulated over $40 billion, becoming Europe’s richest man. In Russia, the more things change, the more they seem to stay the same. This brings us back to Kirill/Mikhailov. In 2006 Archbishop Kirill’s personal wealth was estimated at $4 billion by the Moscow News. No wonder. In the mid-1990s, the Russian Orthodox Church’s Department for External Church Relations, managed by Kirill, was granted the privilege of duty-free importation of cigarettes as reward for his loyalty to the KGB. It did not take long for him to become the largest supplier of foreign cigarettes in Russia. A few years ago, while Kirill was visiting Ukraine as the new Patriarch of Russia, a newspaper published a photo in which the prelate could be seen wearing a Breguet wristwatch, the price of which was estimated at 30,000 euros. The Russian newspaper Kommersant accused Kirill of abusing the privilege of duty-free importation of cigarettes, and dubbed him the “tobacco metropolitan.” Kirill denied having such a watch. He said the photograph must have been altered by his enemies, and he posted the “real” photograph on his official website. A careful study of this “real” photograph, however, shows that the Breguet watch had been airbrushed off his wrist, but its reflection is still clearly visible on a table surface beneath his arm. Mikhailov and his KGB, rechristened FSB, are now doing their best to airbrush out the apron strings connecting them to liberation theology. Let’s not allow them to succeed.

— Lieutenant General (retired) Ion Mihai Pacepa is the highest-ranking Soviet-bloc official ever to defect to the West. His last book, Disinformation, co-authored with Professor Ronald Rychlak and published by WND, is currently being made into a Hollywood movie.

Read more at: http://www.nationalreview.com/article/417383/secret-roots-liberation-theology
Former Soviet spy: We created Liberation Theology
Ion Mihai Pacepa on Raul Castro's yacht in Cuba, 1974. Photo courtesy of Ion Mihai Pacepa.

Washington D.C., May 1, 2015 / 03:34 pm (CNA). Espionage deep in the heart of Europe. Secrets in the KGB. Defection from a communist nation. Ion Mihai Pacepa has seen his share of excitement, serving as general for Communist Romania’s secret police before defecting to the United States in the late 1970s.

The highest-ranking defector from communism in the ‘70s, he spoke to CNA recently about the connection between the Soviet Union and Liberation Theology in Latin America. Below are excerpts of the interview. All footnotes were provided by Pacepa.

In general, could you say that the spreading of Liberation Theology had any kind of Soviet connection?

Yes. I learned the fine points of the KGB involvement with Liberation Theology from Soviet General Aleksandr Sakharovsky, communist Romania’s chief razvedka (foreign intelligence) adviser – and my de facto boss, until 1956, when he became head of the Soviet espionage service, the PGU1, a position he held for an unprecedented record of 15 years.

On October 26, 1959, Sakharovsky and his new boss, Nikita Khrushchev, came to Romania for what would become known as “Khrushchev’s six-day vacation.” He had never taken such a long vacation abroad, nor was his stay in Romania really a vacation. Khrushchev wanted to go down in history as the Soviet leader who had exported communism to Central and South America. Romania was the only Latin country in the Soviet bloc, and Khrushchev wanted to enroll her “Latin leaders” in his new “liberation” war.

I learned about Sakharovsky from your writings, but I could not find any other relevant information about him. Why?

Sakharovsky was a Soviet reflection of the Cold War's hot years, when not even all the members of the Israeli and British governments knew the identity of the heads of Mossad and MI-6. But Sakharovsky played an extremely important role in shaping Cold War history. He authored the export of communism to Cuba (1958-1961); his nefarious handling of the Berlin crisis (1958-1961) generated the Berlin Wall; his Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Was the Theology of Liberation a movement somehow "created" by Sakharovsky's part of the KGB, or it was an existing movement that was exacerbated by the USSR?

The movement was born in the KGB, and it had a KGB-invented name: Liberation Theology. During those years, the KGB had a penchant for “liberation” movements. The National Liberation Army of Columbia (FARC), created by the KGB with help from Fidel Castro; the
“National Liberation Army of Bolivia, created by the KGB with help from “Che” Guevara; and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), created by the KGB with help from Yasser Arafat are just a few additional “liberation” movements born at the Lubyanka -- the headquarters of the KGB.

The birth of Liberation Theology was the intent of a 1960 super-secret “Party-State Dezinformatsiya Program” approved by Aleksandr Shelepin, the chairman of the KGB, and by Politburo member Aleksey Kirichenko, who coordinated the Communist Party's international policies. This program demanded that the KGB take secret control of the World Council of Churches (WCC), based in Geneva, Switzerland, and use it as cover for converting Liberation Theology into a South American revolutionary tool. The WCC was the largest international ecumenical organization after the Vatican, representing some 550 million Christians of various denominations throughout 120 countries.

The birth of a new religious movement is a historic event. How was this new religious movement launched?

The KGB began by building an intermediate international religious organization called the Christian Peace Conference (CPC), which was headquartered in Prague. Its main task was to bring the KGB-created Liberation Theology into the real world.

The new Christian Peace Conference was managed by the KGB and was subordinated to the venerable World Peace Council, another KGB creation, founded in 1949 and by then also headquartered in Prague.

During my years at the top of the Soviet bloc intelligence community I managed the Romanian operations of the World Peace Council (WPC). It was as purely KGB as it gets. Most of the WPC’s employees were undercover Soviet bloc intelligence officers. The WPC’s two publications in French, Nouvelles perspectives and Courrier de la Paix, were also managed by undercover KGB – and Romanian DIE2 - intelligence officers. Even the money for the WPC budget came from Moscow, delivered by the KGB in the form of laundered cash dollars to hide their Soviet origin. In 1989, when the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, the WPC publicly admitted that 90% of its money came from the KGB3.

How did the Theology of Liberation start?

I was not involved in the creation of Liberation Theology per se. From Sakharovsky I learned, however, that in 1968 the KGB-created Christian Peace Conference, supported by the worldwide World Peace Council, was able to maneuver a group of leftist South American bishops into holding a Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellin, Colombia. The Conference’s official task was to ameliorate poverty. Its undeclared goal was to recognize a new religious movement encouraging the poor to rebel against the “institutionalized violence of poverty,” and to recommend the new movement to the World Council of Churches for official approval.

The Medellin Conference achieved both goals. It also bought the KGB-born name “Liberation Theology.”
Theology of Liberation had key leaders, some of them famous “pastoral” figures, some others intellectuals. Do you know if there was any involvement of the Soviet bloc in promoting either the personal image or the writings of such personalities? Any specific connection with Bishops Sergio Mendes Arceo from Mexico or Helder Camara from Brazil? Any possible direct connection with liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff, Frei Betto, Henry Camacho or Gustavo Gutierrez?

I have good reason to suspect that there was an organic connection between the KGB and some of those leading promoters of Liberation Theology, but I have no evidence to prove it. For the last 15 years of my life in Romania (1963 - 1978), I managed that country’s scientific and technological espionage, as well as the disinformation operations aimed at improving Ceausescu's stature in the West.

I recently glanced through Gutierrez's book A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation (1971), and I had the feeling that it was written at the Lubyanka. No wonder he is now credited with being the founder of Liberation Theology. From feelings to facts, however, is a long way.

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Footnotes:

1) Pervoye Glavnoye Upravleniye, or First Chief Directorate of the KGB
2) Departamentul de Informatii Externe, Romania’s foreign intelligence service.


'Disinformation' and a Dubious Source (15598)
BOOK REVIEW Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa's story defames a legendary Vatican diplomat and undermines positive Catholic-Russian Orthodox relations.

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by VICTOR GAETAN 08/10/2013 Comments (34)
The Soviet era is a deeply tragic chapter in the Catholic Church’s history. Though Christianity triumphed — the Gospel view of individual dignity trounced Marx’s materialism and class struggle — we lost so much: thousands of devout Christians, including bishops murdered and jailed, Church property confiscated and destroyed, generations of uncatechized faithful, and sacraments suppressed.

No comprehensive book has yet been written about the Church’s vision and bravery against communism (although Blessed John Paul II’s pivotal role has been well described in some). But a recent book purporting new information about this part of history delivers instead confusion and hyperbole.

Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion and Promoting Terrorism by former Romanian Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa and University of Mississippi law professor Ronald Rychlak is marked by significant errors that misrepresent both history and contemporary challenges facing the Church.

An oddity about Disinformation is its authorship. Two authors are listed, but only one narrates. Pacepa is an intensely controversial former communist official whose defection to the United States in 1978 is still not well understood. Pacepa, 84, never appears in public, won’t answer questions by phone and responds to email through third parties, one of whom told me, “I don’t know if he even exists!”

His co-author is Ronald Rychlak, a Catholic law professor best known for his book Hitler, the War and the Pope (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000, 2010), a well-researched defense of Pope Pius
XII’s record during World War II. In *Disinformation*, left-wing efforts to defame Pope Pius are offered as a case study of the Kremlin’s propaganda machine. What Rychlak contributes, drawn from his earlier work on Pope Pius, appears solid; what Pacepa adds, drawn from his sordid past as a Stalinist henchman and strategist for 27 years in Romania, is dubious at best.

**Pacepa’s Story**
Six years ago, Pacepa unveiled a disturbing account of helping the KGB infiltrate the secret Vatican Archives to steal documents in order to frame Pope Pius XII. In the article “Moscow’s Assault on the Vatican,” published in 2007, Pacepa claimed he convinced legendary Vatican diplomat Msgr. Agostino Casaroli — later cardinal and secretary of state under Pope John Paul II — to let three Romanian agents, posing as priests, peruse the papal archives. Under scrutiny, Pacepa’s story began to unravel, with doubts expressed by historians and Vatican experts. Then the reason Pacepa claimed to have credibility with the Vatican collapsed: He said he had engineered a “spy trade” in 1959, exchanging jailed Romanian Archbishop Augustin Pacha for two spies caught in West Germany. But Archbishop Ioan Robu of Bucharest showed photos of the bishop’s 1954 crypt, explaining the heroic man was already dead when Pacepa claimed to have liberated him. In *Disinformation*, Pacepa tries again to sell the story of Vatican infiltration. The book adds no new evidence to support his claims. *Disinformation*, however, adds fuel to an ongoing debate over Pacepa’s own past.

**Casaroli’s Involvement**
One of the most startling claims Pacepa makes, in the article and the book, is that, in a one-on-one meeting in Geneva, Msgr. Casaroli agreed “in principle” to give Romania a $1-billion, interest-free loan in exchange for restoring full diplomatic relations with the Vatican — relations that had dramatically ruptured in 1950, when Romania expelled the apostolic nuncio. By casting suspicion on Cardinal Casaroli’s judgment and character, Pacepa undermines the integrity of the entire Vatican strategy between 1963 and 1989 known as “Ostpolitik.” The policy involved maintaining dialogue with communist regimes in order to assist the oppressed Church and believers behind the Iron Curtain without legitimizing dictatorships. In his memoirs, Cardinal Casaroli described this effort as “exceptionally difficult.” The Vatican was convinced that communist repression would eventually lead to the downfall of the entire ideology. Cardinal Casaroli compared communism to a huge tree that appears big and powerful but is rotting inside. According to Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, who assisted Cardinal Casaroli, the emissary worked directly for three popes on specific assignments; he was not a rogue operator cutting dubious deals with mid-level communist opportunists. “Cardinal Casaroli began in 1963, in a highly structured way, as a result of great thought at the highest level. It is impossible that he talked about money or a loan with this man [Pacepa] or used his office to facilitate spies,” Cardinal Silvestrini told the Register. According to Msgr. Gabriele Caccia, an assessor with the Vatican Secretariat of State, no loan was ever made to Romania.
Vatican diplomats Cardinals Giovanni Cheli and Luigi Poggi were involved in negotiations with Romania and the Soviet bloc. Cardinal Cheli called Pacepa’s allegations “untruthful scenarios,” while Cardinal Poggi declared them “the product of a troubled mind and soul.” Archbishop Robu, who was consecrated by Cardinal Casaroli, emphatically calls the Pacepa account false: “We would know, it would be in our memories, if Romanian spies gained access to the Vatican Archives. It didn’t happen.”

**Deeply Anti-Russian**
Overall, *Disinformation* is aggressively anti-Russian. Pacepa makes no distinction between the Soviet era and the post-communist one. Pacepa’s caustic description of Russia and the Orthodox Church today directly contradicts Vatican policy. The Vatican sees Russia, together with Europe and Latin America, as part of Western civilization — and a bulwark against anti-Christian trends. Pope Benedict XVI established full diplomatic relations with Russia and intense dialogue with the Orthodox Church (which represents 71% of the population), which is experiencing revival. The two Churches are closer today than perhaps any time since the East-West Schism of 1054. In *Disinformation*, Pacepa credits KGB operations with everything from plotting the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy to provoking the rise of Islamic extremism. In each scenario, he portrays himself as a witness to history — when his true rank and job description would never explain access to these events or decisions.

**The Neighborhood That Knows Him**
Larry Watts, an American historian and intelligence expert who advised the post-communist Romanian government on how to assert civilian control over its spy agencies (and bring them into NATO compliance), published a major study of the Romanian-Soviet relationship, *WithFriends Like These: The Soviet Bloc’s Clandestine War Against Romania*, in 2010 based on extensive research in the East German, Soviet and Romanian archives.

Watts concludes that Pacepa must have been a KGB spy, in large part for the ways he tried to disrupt the U.S.-Romanian relationship when he defected to the United States in 1978, peddling the line that Romania was a Trojan horse for Soviet interests.

Watts’ hypothesis about Pacepa was received as a bombshell in Romania, mainly because it means he is a traitor: A Soviet agent working in Romania, especially after 1958, would be directing events against Romania’s preferences and interests.

Just two months ago, a major symposium at a Bucharest museum was held titled *The Pacepa File*. It brought together intellectuals, historians, journalists and politicians who grappled with subjects around Pacepa, including whether he was a KGB agent or not.

One subject was Pacepa’s credibility, given his role as an initiator of crimes against communist opponents. According to Dinu Zamfirescu, president of the Institute for Investigating Communist Crimes’ scientific counsel and a CNSAS official, Pacepa signed orders to frame and destroy exiled anti-communists.

The official *Plan de Masuri* (Operational Plans Against a Target), signed by Pacepa, ordered “repeated harassment and the application of corrective physical measures” against Radio Free Europe (RFE) employees. CNSAS ruled in 2006 that Pacepa was an agent of Romania’s communist political police.

When asked in 2007 by Zenit news service what he thought about Pacepa’s story, Father Peter Gumpel, relator of the cause for canonization for Pope Pius XII, explained his skepticism,
saying, “It is necessary to take into account that spies need to justify their existence and must give value to things that have very little importance or none at all.”

Despite the intention of defending Pope Pius XII, Pacepa’s pose in Disinformation is audacious and disingenuous. Readers should beware.

Register correspondent Victor Gaeta writes from Washington. He is a contributor to Foreign Affairs magazine.

He received the 2011 Catholic Press Association’s top award for a Register series of articles on Cuba.

Letter to the Editor

Having read the Register’s review (Aug. 10, NCRRegister.com) of Disinformation by professor Ronald Rychlak and Gen. Ion Pacepa, I am writing to protest and express my outrage at the way in which a quotation of mine was misused to support this uncouth review.

The comment of mine which is quoted: “It is necessary to take into account that spies need to justify their existence, and must give value to things that have very little importance or none at all,” comes from a 2007 Zenit News Agency story (as the review itself briefly acknowledges) and therefore has nothing whatsoever to do with the 2013 publication of Disinformation, the specific book under review.

My 2007 comment was simply meant to encourage a proper scholarly evaluation of Gen. Pacepa’s statements at that time — not to dismiss all of them outright, much less declare none of them could ever be established. In fact, the Zenit story referenced misleadingly in your review actually notes that I “agreed” with Pacepa in large part; and what I also told Zenit, but which your review of Disinformation left unmentioned, was the following: “One needs to be extremely prudent and try to verify the facts.” I did not — I repeat — say every aspect of Gen. Pacepa’s account could never be verified, only that it needed to be carefully considered — which it has been, by numerous scholars, since 2007, during which a considerable amount of new information has appeared supporting it.

Moreover, the way in which my 2001 quotation was used, in the Register’s review of Disinformation, leaves the impression that I doubt Pacepa’s statements dealing with the communist disinformation campaign against Pius XII, and consider them nothing more than a spy-induced fabrication. In fact, as anyone who reads the 2007 Zenit, news article can make it abundantly clear at the time that there was in fact a concerted communist campaign to infiltrate and compromise the Vatican, and to defame Venerable Pius XII.

Therefore, both professor Rychlak and Gen. Pacepa deserve to be praised, not attacked, for recounting and documenting this indisputable historical reality in Disinformation.

Debates among academics, historians and diplomats about certain details of this campaign are to be expected, but pale in comparison to that central and overwhelming fact.

Instead of highlighting this, However, the review launches into a series of ad hominem attacks against Gen. Pacepa, which I am sure both he and professor Rychlak can answer. It should also be stressed that both men authored the book together — a book they submitted to me in advance of publication — and so the Register’s attempt to separate the excellent work of professor Rychlak, which I have long admired and supported, from Gen. Pacepa’s is not only unconvincing, but self-evidently wrong.

The Register’s use of my 2007 quotation, in such an out-of-context and misleading way, was highly irresponsible, and so I request the Register to immediately acknowledge this, and publish this letter in your publication, lest your readers be misled.

Father Peter Gumpel, S.J.
Rome, Italy

The editor responds: The Register acknowledges that Victor Gaetan, while crediting the 2007 source of the quote he used, did not seek additional comments from Father Gumpel regarding the book *Disinformation* to clarify Father Gumpel’s views on the credibility of Gen. Ion Pacepa. However, the Register did not at any time indicate that a disinformation campaign against Pope Pius XII did not take place. On the contrary, regarding the research of professor Ronald Rychlak, the Register previously has published Rychlak’s own account of why he believes Pacepa’s story in the article “The Framing of Pius XII from Skepticism to Belief.”

The writer responds:
In light of Father Gumpel’s letter, I’m afraid the following three historical facts are not clearly enough stated in my book review of *Disinformation*: 1) From its inception, the Soviet Union targeted the Catholic Church as an enemy power; 2) the Kremlin’s intelligence apparatus, the KGB, attempted to infiltrate the Vatican, especially during and after the Second Vatican Council; and 3) Pope Pius XII’s heroic behavior has been maligned by political forces uninterested in historical accuracy.

No other global institution foresaw Communism’s evil. As early as 1846, Pope Pius IX explained Communism would lead to “the complete destruction of everyone’s laws, government, property, and even of human society itself” in the encyclical *Qui Pluribus*.

The Holy See, under the guidance of Pope Pius XII issued a decree in 1949 that Catholics who “defend or propagate” the Communist doctrine “contract ipso facto excommunication.”

An excellent source on Kremlin attempts to undermine the Church is *Spies in the Vatican: The Soviet Union’s Cold War Against the Catholic Church* (Pegasus Books, 2009) by John Koehler, a former Associated Press reporter, U.S. Army intelligence officer, and advisor to President Ronald Reagan.

Koehler portrays the KGB’s operational program against the Vatican. He explains how some priests, especially from Hungary, Poland, and East Germany, were recruited to serve as undercover agents, gaining access to the Curia.

Stefano Bottoni, an Italian-Hungarian scholar, plumbed the Hungarian archives and found devastating evidence of decades-long spy missions launched against Rome after 1963 — information not even mentioned by Pacepa/Rychlak.

KGB archives confirm the reality of a multilateral plan to penetrate the Vatican.

According to material in *The Sword and the Shield* by former KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin and British historian Christopher Andrew, senior Soviet bloc officials met in Budapest in 1967 to discuss ways to discredit the Vatican. Interestingly, only representatives from Romania disagreed with the need to target the Catholic Church.

Father Gumpel says that former-Communist official Ion Pacepa’s claims should be weighed. I conducted that research; there’s no evidence for his particular story. The very noble goal — which I share — of proving Pope Pius XII righteous among nations in his heroic efforts to save Jews will succeed because it is true. We do not need to rely on false stories to set the historic record straight.

Victor Gaetan

http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/the-framing-of-pius-xii-from-skepticism-to-belief
The Framing of Pius XII - From Skepticism to Belief

by Edward Pentin 08/17/2012 Comments (21)

Professor Ronald J. Rychlak is an expert on the “Hitler’s Pope” controversy surrounding Venerable Pope Pius XII.

But despite being a defender of Pius XII’s wartime record in saving Jewish lives from the Holocaust, the American law professor at the University of Mississippi was initially skeptical of claims, first disclosed by former Romanian intelligence chief General Ion Mihai Pacepa in 2007, that efforts to blacken Pius’s name were driven by a Soviet plot.

Yet after two years of research and regular contact with Pacepa, his perception changed, and he is now convinced that the KGB played a key role in framing Pius XII by promoting The Deputy – Rolf Hochhuth’s 1963 play that gave birth to the “Black Legend” of Pius as a Nazi sympathizer. He has now co-written a new book with Pacepa on the plot, called Disinformation, due to be published soon.

Below is Professor Rychlak’s own account of how he changed his mind. My recent two-part interview with Pacepa can be read here and here:

Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa and the Plot Against the Pope

Ronald J. Rychlak

The 2007 revelations from Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa about the theatrical play, The Deputy, were new to all of us who had studied Pius XII and the Holocaust. According to Pacepa, that play, which was the source of the false charges of papal indifference to Jewish suffering, was a Kremlin-directed plot. When I first heard this claim, I did not simply trust Pacepa; I decided to investigate.

At first I engaged in some long email exchanges with friends and colleagues. Most of us did not know where or how to look into these claims. Bill Donohue of the Catholic League offered to fund travel to Russia or elsewhere if that would help, but I could not figure out where to look. It would have been a waste of money. Some of my colleagues said just to forget it – it would be a “footnote” in the Pius XII debate. Pacepa’s account, however, deserved at least some attention.
I went back to the place I began my original work on Pius XII some 15 years earlier: the local public library. Within 15 minutes I found an interesting book written by a former KGB officer that told of how he had obtained control over a small but influential periodical. I was also able to confirm that the periodical in question had promoted the play *The Deputy*, which Pacepa had just said was a Soviet plot. That made things interesting.

I spent the next two years researching Pacepa’s claim, and bit by bit all the pieces fell in place. The new picture answered many questions and made sense out of things that had previously been inexplicable. Consider:

1. The German and American producers of the play, the American publisher, and the French translator, were all Communists.
   a. Throughout his life, the German producer produced plays under orders from the Communist Party.
   b. The German theater at which *The Deputy* opened was overtly dedicated to pro-Communist propaganda. In fact, this was its first play.
   c. The American Producer had been fined and given a suspended criminal sentence by the House Un-American Activities Committee.
   d. The American publisher considered Communism to be his “religion.”
   e. The French translator was a member of the Spanish Communist Party’s politburo and had for several years organized clandestine activities for that organization.

2. The play was promoted with Soviet-style propaganda.
   a. Many of the early positive reviewers had Communist ties.
      i. At least one was paid by the KGB.
      ii. Another was a former KGB spy
      iii. Others were at the time or had previously been members of the Communist Party
   b. The play would not have opened on Broadway but for support from a “Catholic” magazine that was falling under Communist influence at the time.
      i. The magazine also set forth the Soviet line on the Vietnam War, the Kennedy Assassinations, the CIA’s funding of student groups, and other issues.
      ii. The CIA came to believe that Soviet money funded the magazine.

3. Rolf Hochhuth, known to the world as the author of *The Deputy*, was a likely target for a KGB-style operation.
   a. He was an unknown writer.
   b. His research methods were sloppy at best (resulting in a significant legal verdict against him for his work on a different play).
   c. He has been caught in outright lies.
   d. After *The Deputy* was written, he worked closely with his life-long friend David Irving, a noted Holocaust denier whom Hochhuth has frequently defended.
   e. In 1969, British Intelligence prepared a report noting its suspicion of his efforts to advance ideas designed to undermine the West.
   f. Hochhuth lived in fear of being assassinated by British spies of “the Old Firm.” It made no sense to those around him, but it makes sense when it is realized that he was engaged in Soviet actions against the West.

Eventually I wrote a chapter on these and other findings, and I included it in the new edition of my book: *Hitler, the War, and the Pope: Revised and Expanded* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2010). Before that book got into print, I was able to make contact with Pacepa. (More accurately, I suppose, is that he got in touch with me after I sent the chapter to an editor he knew). Pacepa
brought even more clarity to these issues, including correcting a mistake in my book. I had attributed the inexplicable anti-Semitism found in *The Deputy* to Hochhuth. As we explain in our new book, *Disinformation*, the anti-Semitism was a clear fingerprint of the KGB authors. There were several things that Pacepa told me about Soviet bloc intelligence that surprised me. Each time, however, I did independent research and verified his account. Moreover, he was intellectually honest. One time, for instance, I found a book that verified a claim that had seemed far-fetched when I heard it (it related to admissions made in KGB publications). As we worked on our manuscript, I thought that the citation I had found would be important to prove a controversial point. Pacepa stopped me, however, saying that the source could not be trusted. I told him that we needed support on this point. He still refused to use it. Instead he found another source that also verified what he had told me.

After corresponding with Pacepa for three years now, and after having read his books and many of his articles (and articles about him), I know that he has never steered me wrong. My 2007 reaction was the natural, cautious comment of someone exposed to a new and unfamiliar proposal. After two years of careful research, I changed my mind. In 2010, I published my reasons, and I am now working with him on our upcoming book, *Disinformation*. I am proud to be associated with him.

http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/203457/defense-gen-ion-mihai-pacepa-spyridon-mitsotakis

**In Defense of Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa**

A bizarre and slanderous attack on the highest Soviet-Bloc official ever to defect to the United States.

September 9, 2013

**Spyridon Mitsotakis**
“Moscow’s Assault on the Vatican,” combines it with the latest slanders against Pacepa from the remnants of Nicolae Ceausescu’s entourage, and presents it as a review of the book. *Disinformation* is an account of how the Soviet Union used lies to attack its enemies, a tactic known as *dezinformatsiya*. A key part of this is “framing,” the practice of changing someone or something’s past to suit the present (an example given in the book was the Washington Post's fake Mitt Romney hair-cutting bully story, which was meant to frame the former presidential candidate as a nasty homophobe). The primary case study provided in the book is the campaign to discredit Pope Pius XII – providing not only a well-documented defense of the wartime Pope, but an equally well-documented exposé of his accusers (a trail of lies leading right back to the Kremlin).

Gaetan, however, writes:

An oddity about *Disinformation* is its authorship. Two authors are listed, but only one narrates. Pacepa is an intensely controversial former communist official whose defection to the United States in 1978 is still not well understood. Pacepa, 84, never appears in public, won’t answer questions by phone and responds to email through third parties, one of whom told me, “I don’t know if he even exists!”

I can confirm that Pacepa is indeed elusive. Why? Because there are people trying to hunt him down. After his defection, Pacepa’s assassination became top priority, with death squads deployed and figures like Carlos the Jackal, Yassir Arafat and Muammar Qaddafi routinely being discovered as trying to locate him. Lt. Gen Iulian Vățlă – who Ceausescu placed in charge of assassinating Pacepa – is still a free man in Romania and walks the streets with impunity. And yes, Pacepa does exist – see, for example, Congressman Frank Wolf’s autobiography *Prisoner of Conscience*.

Gaetan then goes on to attack Pacepa's 2007 article:

In the article “Moscow’s Assault on the Vatican,” published in 2007, Pacepa claimed he convinced legendary Vatican diplomat Msgr. Agostino Casaroli – later cardinal and secretary of state under Pope John Paul II – to let three Romanian agents, posing as priests, peruse the papal archives. Under scrutiny, Pacepa’s story began to unravel, with doubts expressed by historians and Vatican experts.

Then the reason Pacepa claimed to have credibility with the Vatican collapsed: He said he had engineered a “spy trade” in 1959, exchanging jailed Romanian Archbishop Augustin Pacha for two spies caught in West Germany. But Archbishop Ioan Robu of Bucharest showed photos of the bishop’s 1954 crypt, explaining the heroic man was already dead when Pacepa claimed to have liberated him.

He left out that many of the errors the article was criticized for have been corrected in the book. For example, it is noted that: “In his NRO article, *Moscow’s Assault on the Vatican*, Pacepa mistakenly stated that Archbishop Augustin Pacha was exchanged for the two DIE officers. In fact, Archbishop Pacha was released from jail but died in Romania shortly thereafter.” And he names the four Catholics who were swapped: Msgr. Josef Nischback, rector of the Catholic Cathedral in Timisoara; Dr. theol. Franz Kräuter, archivist of the Catholic diocese of Timisoara; Sr. Hildegardis Wulff, co-founder of the Benedictine order of St. Lioba, who had dedicated her life to working with Volksdeutsche women in Romania; and Sr. Patricia Zimmermann.

Gaetan then really drops the ball:
One of the most startling claims Pacepa makes, in the article and the book, is that, in a one-on-one meeting in Geneva, Msgr. Casaroli agreed “in principle” to give Romania a $1-billion, interest-free loan in exchange for restoring full diplomatic relations with the Vatican — relations that had dramatically ruptured in 1950, when Romania expelled the apostolic nuncio. He then spends the next few paragraphs attacking this claim. There is one problem – the book never says that. Gaetan just built a straw man, and proceeded to attack it. Here is what the book actually says about the topic:

I had arranged a spy exchange the year before, but now the Soviet bloc needed a new cover story. It was decided that if Romania were to seek a loan from the Vatican, that would provide a possible explanation for why that nation was changing its position vis-à-vis the Holy See. I was instructed to tell Casaroli that Romania was ready to restore diplomatic relations with the Holy See in exchange for access to its archives and a one-billion-dollar, interest-free loan. I was also instructed to tell the Vatican that Romania needed access to the archives in order to find historical roots that would help the Romanian government publicly justify its change of heart toward the Holy See. Of course, this was simply a ploy. Ceausescu had no intention of restoring diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

The loan would, of course, have been welcome, but it was never a true aim. Moscow just wanted to open Vatican doors for a few DIE [Romanian Intelligence] agents. Suggesting that Romania needed money provided a “cover” motivation for the proposal. The Vatican did agree to discuss the loan—although it was never made—and also agreed to what seemed a simple request: to allow three Romanian priests to do some research in Vatican archives. With that agreement, I had accomplished my part of the plan. …

[For the operation], the DIE chose three priests who were also co-opted agents. There they were given access to certain Vatican archives. … The DIE agents secretly photographed some unimportant documents, and the DIE sent the films to the KGB via special courier. The documents were not incriminating; they were mainly things like press reports and transcripts of unclassified meetings and speeches, couched in the routine kind of diplomatic language one would expect to find in such material. Nevertheless, the KGB kept asking for more. Even if these documents did not actually provide any compromising information on Pius XII, the insinuation that his new image was based on “original Vatican documents” would dramatically improve the credibility of the whole framing operation.

Pacepa writes that after his 2007 article was published, researchers in the archives of the Communist-era Romanian Secret Police were able to identify one of the three spies: Fr. Francisc Iosif Pal, SJ. “Nothing that Pal or the other DIE agents found in Vatican archives could be used as a basis for fabricating believable evidence that made Pius seem sympathetic to Hitler’s regime or unconcerned about the Jews.”

Gaetan complains: “Overall, Disinformation is aggressively anti-Russian. Pacepa makes no distinction between the Soviet era and the post-communist one. Pacepa’s caustic description of Russia and the Orthodox Church today directly contradicts Vatican policy.” Pacepa, of course, has good reason to be distrustful of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church. Upon taking power, Putin appointed his “former” KGB comrades to the most government posts. Russia today is nothing short of a KGB empire. And the patriarch of the Church is “Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk (a secret member of the KGB codenamed 'Mikhaylov').” His background: “In 1971, the KGB had sent Kirill to Geneva as a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to that Soviet propaganda machine, the World Council of Churches. In 1975, the KGB infiltrated him into the Central Committee of the WCC, which had become a Kremlin pawn. In 1989 the KGB
appointed him chairman of the Russian patriarchate’s foreign relations as well. He still held those positions when he was elected patriarch.”

But the most bizarre part of the review is what is used to attack Pacepa himself. Gaetan writes: Larry Watts, an American historian and intelligence expert who advised the post-communist Romanian government on how to assert civilian control over its spy agencies (and bring them into NATO compliance), published a major study of the Romanian-Soviet relationship, *With Friends Like These: The Soviet Bloc's Clandestine War Against Romania*, in 2010 based on extensive research in the East German, Soviet and Romanian archives.

Watts concludes that Pacepa must have been a KGB spy, in large part for the ways he tried to disrupt the U.S.-Romanian relationship when he defected to the United States in 1978, peddling the line that Romania was a Trojan horse for Soviet interests.

Watts’ hypothesis about Pacepa was received as a bombshell in Romania, mainly because it means he is a traitor: A Soviet agent working in Romania, especially after 1958, would be directing events against Romania’s preferences and interests.

Mr. Gaetan is not telling the truth about who Larry Watts is and how he functions. Watts, an American, traveled to Romania in 1980 and, for unknown reasons, began working with Ceausescu’s regime. Not long after Ceausescu was overthrown in December 1989, Watts became an advisor to the director of foreign intelligence for the government of Ion Iliescu. According to Romanian media reports in the 1990s, Iliescu was recruited into the KGB by "Professor" Igor Botnarichuk while a student at the Moscow Engineering Institute in the 1950s, his code name was IANCU and his code number was D-KGB-90519. Furthermore, according to documentation obtained by Russian dissidents Vlatimir Bukovsky and Pavel Stroilov and Polish historian Adam Burakowski, Iliescu acted on Moscow’s behalf to hijack the popular anti-communist Romanian revolution of 1989 and kept Romania functioning as a Kremlin satellite until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

It was during this time that Watts wrote *Romanian Cassandra: Ion Antonescu and the Struggle for Reform, 1916–1941* (1993). This book was part of a semi-official campaign to rehabilitate the Nazi-puppet dictator Ion Antonescu. Watts’ way of approaching his topic is not only to ignore every smoking gun document proving Antonescu’s participation in the Holocaust, but to obscure the facts with a mass of irrelevant documents. Irina Livezeanu of the University of Pittsburgh aptly explains Watts' modus operandi: "[He operates] less by means of clear, logical arguments and a judicious use of evidence, than through bold revisionist assertions and a bewildering, almost haphazard, array of partial and inconclusive evidence. ... In support of his theses, he deploys what appears to be thick documentation, but much of this turns out to be undigested or irrelevant material in terms of the main lines of argument, which are themselves less than clear.” [*Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Autumn, 1996), pp. 673-674.]

Thus, like in *Romanian Cassandra*, in *With Friends Like These*, Watts drones on endlessly, sighting a multitude of confusing documents, then tells the bewildered reader that it somehow proves his point. Innuendo, however, is not the same as truth. There is nothing in that book showing Pacepa had been a KGB agent. And the claims of a pro-American, anti-Soviet Ceausescu are easily refutable by simply referring to an extraordinary well-written and researched – and very readable – 68-page 2010 thesis of Georgetown University student Rodica Eliza Gheorghe titled “The Romanian Intelligence Services During The Cold War: How Small Powers Can Sometimes Be Strong," available at repository.library.georgetown.edu. Ironic, isn’t it – the stooge of a KGB stooge is calling a man who risked his life to fight the KGB’s stooges a
KGB stooge. To reiterate Chico Marx’s question: “Who are you gonna believe, me or your own eyes?”
I don’t know what drove Mr. Gaetan to write this attack, but it is very misguided. I hope he will reconsider his view of Pacepa’s extraordinary book.

About Spyridon Mitsotakis
Spyridon Mitsotakis is a writer and former research assistant to bestselling author Paul Kengor. He graduated from New York University with a degree in History.