

Secret files of prewar pope to be released: Pius XI reigned from 1922 to 1939

News in the [July 25, 2006](#) issue

The secret files of Pope Pius XI, who reigned at the start of World War II, will be released from the Vatican archives in mid-September, Rome has announced.

The files, which cover Pius XI's tenure as pope —from February 6, 1922, to February 10, 1939—are sure to attract the attention of scholars studying the legacy of his successor, Pius XII.

Pius XII, who has been criticized for his perceived failure to defend European Jewry from the Nazis, served as Pius XI's chief negotiator with Nazi Germany prior to his election as pope.

In 1933, Pius XII, then known as Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, brokered a special treaty between Nazi Germany and the Holy See known as the *Reichskonkordat*, which included guarantees of liberty for the church, independence for Catholic organizations and religious teaching in schools.

Pius XI later condemned Hitler's regime in a 1937 encyclical that cited Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism as a violation of the *Reichskonkordat*. It was also during Pius XI's reign that the Vatican negotiated the 1929 Lateran Pact with Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. That agreement established Vatican City as a sovereign state.

Scholars will be able to access the files beginning September 18. —*Religion News Service*