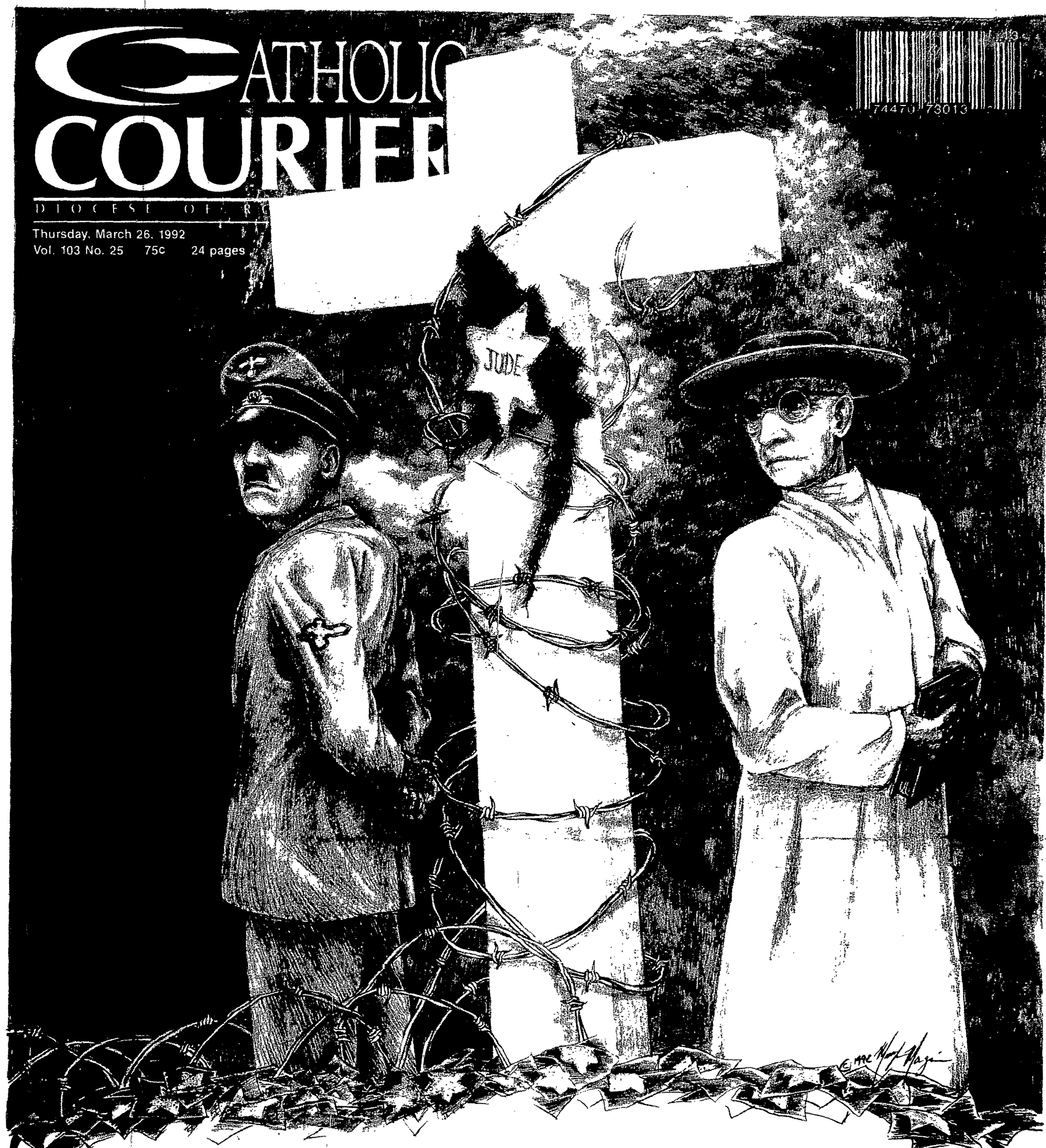


# CATHOLIC COURIER

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## Vatican-Nazi speculation revived

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

When Kurt Schenk was a student at Rochester's St. John Fisher College during the early 1980s, he sat down with his father, Werner Schenk to tape the elder man's reminiscences about life during Germany's Nazi era.

Those experiences inspired Schenk's composition of *Halb Jude*, which spoke, in part, of the heroic attempt by Catholic priests in Lubeck, Germany, to defy the Nazi regime. Criticizing the Nazis' anti-Semitic laws — and their regulation of Catholicism — cost these heroic priests their lives at the hands of Nazi executioners.

Werner Schenk, who emigrated to the United States in 1950, doesn't mince words when discussing those who protected him in Lubeck.

"If it wouldn't have been for some Catholic friends, I wouldn't be here," he stated.

One of his friends, a Catholic police officer, detested the Nazis and

*Two priests were laid out  
in the city courtyard,  
fleshy holes in their white suits.  
They spoke for us.*

From the poem *Halb Jude (Half-Jew)*  
by Kurt Schenk

refused to give the Nazi salute. He sacrificed his hopes for moving up the promotional ladder by protecting Jews like Schenk from the state-imposed terror.

"He was a quite a devout Catholic," Schenk said of his friend.

But Schenk also remembered the police officer expressing disappointment at Pope Pius XII's seeming inability to explicitly condemn the Nazis' persecution of the Jews.

"(The police officer) was always talking about how sad it was that there wasn't more

support from Rome," Schenk recalled.

Schenk's comments summarize many Jewish observations on the role of the Catholic Church during the Nazi era. Most Jews readily point out acts of heroism on the part of individual Catholics — including priests and members of the hierarchy — who put their lives on the line to aid, protect and speak out for Jews.

But although they acknowledge Pope Pius XII's generous material aid to endangered Jews during the Nazi years, many Jewish histor-

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