

# ATTACK ON PIUS XII SOARS

The attack on Pope Pius XII reached new heights with the release of a book by British author, John Cornwell. In Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking Press), the Cambridge University researcher alleges that Pius XII was an anti-Semite who helped Hitler come to power. The October edition of *Vanity Fair* ran an excerpt from the book that triggered immediate controversy.

Cornwell is the author of a previous book, *A Thief in the Night: The Mysterious Death of Pope John Paul I*, that, though critical of the Vatican, nonetheless concluded that there was no conspiracy to kill Pope John Paul I.

William Donohue read the *Vanity Fair* article and released the following comment to the press:

"Scholarship which purports to be ground-breaking must offer evidence that is ground-breaking. On this score, John Cornwell fails miserably. His article is laced with conjecture and innuendo of the most scurrilous kind. Not satisfied to advance the old canard that Pius XII was 'silent' during the Holocaust, Cornwell now wants us to believe that the pope was an active agent servicing Hitler. Make no mistake about it, all of this is being done in an attempt to derail the beatification of this saintly man.

"In 1945, when the war was over, and again in 1958, when Pius XII died, the world Jewish community rightly acknowledged his heroism. They knew that *no one* did more to save Jews than Pope Pius XII. Cornwell offers no evidence that these Jews were fooled.

"Just recently, Lorenzo Cremonesi, Jerusalem correspondent for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, went public with a document that he found in the Israeli archives: in a letter dated October 27, 1945, Msgr. Montini (the future Pope Paul

VI) gave a detailed account of a private audience between Pius XII and Leo Kubwitsky, then-secretary general of the World Jewish Congress (WJC). On behalf of the WJC, Kubwitsky gave Pius XII a gift that would be worth more than one million dollars in today's currency; Kubwitsky expressed 'his gratitude to the august pontiff for his work in support of persecuted Jews.'

"As for *Vanity Fair*, it is a sure bet that its editors would never publish an excerpt from a book that defends Pius XII."

Cornwell, a former seminarian, said 10 years ago that he was a self-described "lapsed Catholic for more than 20 years." He now says he is a "practicing Catholic." Members should know that on September 10, Cornwell turned down an offer by Donohue that the Catholic League was prepared to give him an all-expenses paid week in New York provided that he agree to debate Donohue on radio and TV.