

# DEMAGOGUERY COLORS WIESENTHAL CENTER

In our *New York Times* ad commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope John Paul's papacy, we take note of the slander that has been heaped on the recently beatified Cardinal Stepinac. Leading the slanderous charges has been the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

"In Croatia," writes Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, "you could draw a straight line between the behaviour of the government and the influence of the church." This was said just in time to make the newspapers the day that the pope beatified Cardinal Stepinac.

How embarrassing it must have been for the rabbi, safely tucked away in L.A., to read what his fellow Jews in Croatia said about Cardinal Stepinac on his special day: they said they were "grateful" to him for saving the lives of many Jews. Indeed, Slavko Goldstein, leader of the Jews in Croatia, said "There is no question he saved hundreds of Jews and others." And what does the good rabbi say about the evidence released by the Vatican that shows how the archbishop criticized the pro-Nazi Ustashe regime and how he intervened to save the Jews from death?

This is not the first time that the Catholic League has clashed with the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Last summer, we wrote to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles protesting their labeling of Cardinal Stepinac as a "war criminal." In a rather amazing letter, we were told that "in no place" does the Wiesenthal publication, *Response*, ever use the words "war criminal" to describe Stepinac. That this could be written as a serious response, when the very title of the article in question read, "Beatification of a War Criminal?", is a masterful example of denial that can only be called

Clintonesque.

There is a need to hunt down Nazis and their collaborators, dead or alive; the same rule should apply to Communists who engaged in terror, though Nazi hunters generally have no stomach for such a venture. But when Nazi hunting becomes witch hunting—and that is exactly what the Simon Wiesenthal Center is guilty of—then a noble crusade descends to the level of an ignoble mission, the effect of which is to exculpate the truly guilty.

See our *New York Times* op-ed page ad on Pope John Paul II, reprinted in this issue, for more on Cardinal Stepinac. It is time history gave him his due.