

HITLER'S PLOT TO KIDNAP POPE LEAVES SOME MUTE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the way some have reacted to the news over the weekend that Hitler had ordered the kidnapping of Pope Pius XII:

"An Italian newspaper claims to have uncovered a 1946 document that says Pope Pius XII sought to block the return of Jewish children (who had been hidden by Catholics from the Nazis) to their original families after the war, and immediately the *New York Times* runs a story on it. Moreover, a number of Jewish organizations and pundits jump on the story making demands on the Vatican; one critic called for an international investigation. We now know (as I said in a news release on January 14) that the story appears to have been wrong on every salient point. No matter, we have yet another story on the pope, printed in another Italian newspaper, that says Hitler wanted the pope kidnapped. Only this time the response has been quite different.

"Though the wire services and many major newspapers at home and abroad carried the story, readers of the *New York Times* have yet to read about Hitler's plot. As reported by the British news service, Reuters, 'shortly before the Germans retreated from Rome, SS General Karl Friedrich Otto Wolff, a senior occupation officer in Italy, had been ordered by Hitler to kidnap the pope.' According to the Italian newspaper, *Avvenire*, Wolff subsequently arranged for a secret meeting with the pope; he went to the Vatican in civilian clothes at night with the help of a priest. Wolff assured the pope that no kidnapping would occur, but warned him nonetheless. The newspaper said Hitler considered the pope to be an obstacle to his plan for global domination.

"Writers like Garry Wills, James Carroll, John Cornwell and

Daniel Goldhagen have sought to paint Pope Pius XII as 'Hitler's Pope.' But if they're right, why did Hitler want to deep-six his buddy? Maybe the *New York Times* will offer one of these professional Pius bashers an opportunity to explain himself on its op-ed page. After, of course, the newspaper first runs a news story on the event."