

NEW YORKER ARTICLE INDICTS CHURCH ON HOLOCAUST

An article by James Carroll, "The Silence," in the April 7 edition of the New Yorker magazine, repeats the old canard about the Vatican's silence during the Holocaust. Carroll, who left the priesthood years ago, wants readers to believe that the Vatican sat on its hands while Jews were killed throughout Europe. That the truth is much more complicated is not something Carroll wants to entertain.

Catholic League members will recall that in the December issue of Catalyst we ran a splendid piece by James Bogle, an English barrister, on this subject. We also have a book, Pius XII and the Holocaust, that offers a more accurate picture than the one Carroll presents. And in a lengthy two-part series that recently appeared in the Wanderer by William Doyno, Jr., the record is once again set straight.

Ever since the 1963 play by Rolf Hochhuth, The Deputy, there has been an on-going attempt to indict the Church for what happened to Jews under Hitler. That everyone could have done more seems obvious, but to single out the Catholic Church for blame is simply historically wrong and mean-spirited. It begs the question: precisely who – in any community –should the Vatican have emulated during the Holocaust?

Recent scholarship has disclosed that there were tens of thousands of Jews who served Hitler, including 77 officers and 25 generals. Would it be fair to blame Jews for not doing enough to purge the Hitlerites from their ranks? No. It is easy, all too easy, to play Monday-morning quarterback by indicting Catholics, Jews and Protestants for not doing enough at the time of the Holocaust.

To take a different angle, will those who denounce the

Catholic Church for not doing enough during the Holocaust also denounce virtually the entire world for not doing enough right now about the existence of slavery in Africa? The Sudan and Mauritania are enslaving and brutalizing their subjects and few pundits have anything to say about it. And as readers can see from this issue, the persecution of Christians in China is not met with one iota of resistance from the Clinton administration.

James Carroll gives away his hand when he cites Tissa Balasuriya, the recently excommunicated priest from Sri Lanka, as a victim of Vatican excess. It means nothing to Carroll that his hero openly defied the teachings of the Catholic Church and would have been kicked out of any organization for demonstrating such insubordination.

What this shows is that those who need to vent their displeasure with the Church will continue to publish articles that put the Church in a bad light. If they were honest, they wouldn't continue to repeat the nonsense that Hochhuth started some two decades after the war was over. Unfortunately, it is because they themselves are at war with the Church that we will never hear the end of this.