

RABBI HIER TWISTS THE FACTS TO INDICT PIUS XII

On November 14, Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, issued a news release that was challenged by Catholic League president William Donohue.

On December 7, Donohue asked Rabbi Hier to substantiate the following italicized parts of his comments: “Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden adamantly refused, *pointing out that the Pope had overstepped his neutrality by declaring himself ready to protest damage to historic buildings in Rome while remaining silent regarding the crimes of aggression committed by the Fascists.*”

Donohue asked: “At issue are two things: (a) that Churchill and Eden actually charged the Pope with ‘overstepp[ing] his neutrality’ and (b) that they also charged him for ‘remaining silent’ regarding the crimes of aggression committed by the Fascists.”

After several phone calls trying to get Rabbi Hier to answer, finally he did. In his December 19 letter to Donohue, Hier directed him to pp. 245-46 of John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope*, citing notes 8-9. Donohue branded Hier’s evidence “wholly unconvincing.”

Donohue wrote the following: “It is one thing to say that England did not agree with the pope’s request, quite another to accuse him of ‘overstepping his neutrality.’ Cornwell, in fact, sympathetically says of the pope (p. 246) that ‘As he was the bishop of Rome, it would have been strange had he not been anxious for the state of the Eternal City and had he failed to use all the influence in his power to secure its safety.’ The question is why did you twist what Cornwell said about this event?”

Then Donohue unloaded with the following: "Even more disturbing, you charge that (citing Cornwell) Churchill and Eden accused the pope of 'remaining silent' in the face of Nazi aggression. Yet even Cornwell, who has been roundly condemned by *critics of the pope* for labeling Pacelli 'Hitler's Pope,' never says that the two English statesmen ever made such a charge. In short, there is no proof that Churchill or Eden criticized the pope for being 'silent,' precisely because they never did. Therefore, I ask you the same question: why did you twist what even Cornwell said about this event?"

Donohue ended his letter saying that it was "not too late" for Rabbi Hier to retract his statement. Because Hier had made his comments in a news release, Donohue also made his comments available to the public, including the Jewish press.