

## CHURCH AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

*Jan Mikrut (ed.), La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1933-1945, foreword by Grzegorz Ryś, Gabrielli Editori, Verona, 2019, pp. 951*

The publishing house of *Gabrielli Editori* from Verona and Ph.D. Jan Mikrut, a priest of the Archdiocese of Vienna and professor at the Faculty of History and Cultural Heritage of the Church of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, started a few years ago a monumental project of publishing a series of books addressing the dialectical relationship between the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union and the two Siamese ideologies, communism and Nazism. The publishing series, in which the books were published in Italian language, is titled: *Storia della Chiesa in Europa Centro-Orientale / "History of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe"*. From March 2016 to mid-May 2019, under the guidance of Professor Mikrut, six books were printed on 5581 pages, in the following order:

1. *La Chiesa Cattolica e il Comunismo in Europa Centro-Orientale e in Unione Sovietica / "The Catholic Church and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in March 2016 – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in September 2016 – 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in April 2019, pp. 800, 23 articles;

2. *Paweł Wójcik, Il governo e la Chiesa in Polonia di fronte alla diplomazia Vaticana (1945-1978) / "Government and Church in Poland and Vatican Diplomacy, 1945 – 1978"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in April 2016, pp. 558, monographic edition;

3. *Testimoni della fede. Esperienze personali e collettive dei cattolici in Europa centro-orientale sotto il regime comunista / "Witnesses to the Faith. Personal and Collective Experiences of Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe during the Communist Regime"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in March 2017, pp. 1248, 63 articles;

4. *La Chiesa cattolica in Unione Sovietica. Dalla Rivoluzione del 1917 alla Perestroika / "The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union: From the Revolution of 1917 to Perestroika"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in November 2017, pp. 1024, 49 works;

5. *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1933-1945 / "The Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe and National Socialism 1933 – 1945"*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition in April 2019, pp. 951, 36 works;

6. *Perseguitati per la fede. Le vittime del Nazionalsocialismo in Europa centro-orientale* / "Persecuted for Faith: Victims of National Socialism in Central and Eastern Europe", 1<sup>st</sup> edition in May 2019, pp. 1000, 44 works.

The forewords in the books were written by: 1. Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, retired Archbishop of Prague; 1. Jan Mikrut; 3. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna; 4. Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Minsk and Mahilëu; 5. Grzegorz Ryś, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Łódź; 6. Cardinal Angelo Amato. Reviewers of the fifth book are Josip Dukić and Marek Inglot, of the sixth Zygmunt Zieliński and Emil Kumka, while the first four are not accompanied by reviews. Each volume is enriched with comprehensive lists of names and places mentioned in the texts.

Book presentations had taken place several times in Rome (Pontifical Gregorian University, Pontifical Croatian Institute of St. Jerome) and in Verona (Salon of the Bishops). Then all the books were presented in Split at the same time, organized by the newly founded Centre for Epigraphic, Palaeographic and Historical-Theological Research "Don Frane Bulić", Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Split. The presentation of the books was held in the hall of the Faculty of Catholic Theology on June 3, 2019, in the presence of J. Mikrut, editor of the publishing series.

The authors of the published contributions in the books, called by Cardinal Angelo Amato at his presentation in Rome on May 15, 2019, "a modern library of Christian martyrs", come from various parts of the world and, through their works, they are related to many professional and scientific institutions. Croatian and Slovenian authors have also contributed to the overall project. Out of 215 published articles, they have written 28. In the first volume there are their three papers (Tomo Vukšić, Jure Krišto, Tamara Griesser-Pecar), in the third there are thirteen papers (Ratko Perić, Anto Orlovac, Marko Semren, Natalija Palac, Milenko Krešić ; Juraj Batelja, Jure Krišto, Veronika Popić, Mario Jareb, Pasquale Triulcio, Blaž Otrin, Ilaria Montanar, two works), in the fifth there are six papers (Nika Barić, Marica Karakaš Obradov, Mario Jareb, Tamara Griesser-Pecar, Ilaria Montanar, Renato Podbersić) and also six papers in the sixth (Miroslav Akmadža, Tamara Griesser-Pecar, two papers, Ilaria Montanar, two papers, Ivo Jevnikar).

In the penultimate book of the series, entitled *La Chiesa cattolica in Europa centro-orientale di fronte al Nazionalsocialismo 1933-1945*, published in April 2019, the authors systematically and thoroughly analyze the exceptionally complex relationship between

en the Catholic Church and supporters of the ideology of National Socialism in the period from 1933 to 1945 in some Central European countries. The volume, as noted earlier, begins with a foreword signed by Grzegorz Ryś, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Łódź (pp. 11-16). The following is the opening statement of Editor-in-Chief J. Mikrut (pp. 17-30). The central part of the book (pp. 31-900) contains the works of authors arranged by countries as follows: Albania (one paper), Austria (three papers), Belarus (one paper), Bulgaria (one paper), Czech Republic (three papers), Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (three papers), Slovenia (three papers), Latvia (one paper), Lithuania (two papers), Poland (thirteen papers), Romania (one paper), Slovakia (three papers) and Hungary (one paper). The articles are accompanied by a list of contributors (pp. 901-906), followed by a list of abbreviations used (pp. 907-908) and, lastly, a list of names (pp. 909-935) and places (pp. 936-951). A large number of articles referring to the situation in Poland could be interpreted either by a better exploration of topics in Polish historiography or by the openness of Polish authors to cooperate.

The focus of some authors' topics in this volume is on the relationship of the Catholic Church to the national socialist ideology and regime in power before and during World War II in certain Eastern European countries (Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary). There are very interesting articles dealing with topics such as the attempt to resist Adolf Hitler in Austria, then the relationship between the Government of the Independent State of Croatia and the German Army, then the relationship between the Gestapo and the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic and migration processes caused by the war in the Independent State of Croatia. The volume also contains several topics related to the horrific persecution of Jewish people and their rescue in Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. One of the works deals with the very complex topic of the relationship between the Holy See and German bishops towards the subordinate Church in Poland. Since in the Catholic Church, viewing from a Christian, salvific perspective, a special place belongs to martyrs suffering from hatred of religion, particular attention is drawn to articles dealing with the martyrs of the Austrian and Polish Church. It is clear from all the papers that Nazism regarded the Catholic Church as its most dangerous ideological adversary, trying to silence her in various ways.

In their research work, the authors made extensive use of published and unpublished sources and literature, and showed a

high level of expertise and scientism when analyzing the sources and writing the papers. Their style is understandable. The papers were written in the languages of different nations and then translated into Italian, which makes them accessible to many readers all over the world. The publication of the books represents a major step forward in considering the war and post-war events as objectively as possible in the context of very intricate relations of particular local churches with the National Socialist ideology. Moreover, apart from the cruelty of the Nazis, this series of books illustrates the greatness of Christian martyrs, who lived in a very difficult period of modern history, such as the family of Joseph and Victoria Ulm from Poland, who, together with their seven children, the youngest of whom was still in the mother's womb, were cruelly murdered by the Nazis because they were hiding several Jewish families in their house. The memory of the martyrs, in addition to the historiographical engagement, helps the Church to take a more mature view of her mission in the modern world.

It should be emphasized that the topics explored and published in this volume, though extensively treated, are subject to new and even more systematic research, which may one day give a somewhat clearer answer to the fundamental question of the emergence of a monstrous ideology in the countries that have been deeply impregnated with Christianity throughout history.

Having said all that, it should be pointed out that the published series, initiated and led by Professor J. Mikrut and *Gabrielli Editori* of Verona, is a remarkable contribution to modern world historiography and is worthy of praise.

*Josip Dukić*