

Italian identity, and finally also lost its essence, for it ceased to be a regional movement. In the end, the regional awareness did not turn into the national one, but yielded to Croatian and Italian nationalisms, while the remaining autonomists began to wane amongst Italian irredentists. Their functioning in the service of Italian nationalism, however, had a great impact on international agreements and boundary demarcations after World War I.

Vrandečić's monograph on the autonomist movement of Dalmatia is substantiated on a thorough archival material research. It is written in clear and simple sentences, with a classical drama structure, which makes it attractive not only to specialists but to the wider public as well.

Zdravka Jelaska Marijan

Egon Pelikan: TAJNO DELOVANJE PRIMORSKE DUHOVŠČINE POD FAŠIZMOM. PRIMORSKI KRŠČANSKI SOCIALCI MED VATIKANOM, FAŠISTIČNO ITALIJO IN SLOVENSKO KATOLIŠKO DESNICO – ZGODOVINSKO OZADJE ROMANA KAPLAN MARTIN ČEDERMAC (Secret Activities of the Primorska Clergy under Fascism. Primorska Christian Socials between the Vatican, Fascist Italy and the Slovene Catholic Right Wing – a historical background to the novel Kaplan Martin Čedermac).
Ljubljana, Nova revija, Korenine, 2002, pp. 776

Looking at *Rapallo*, a work of art of the painter Tone Kralj, chosen by assistant professor dr. Egon Pelikan for the cover of his latest book dealing with secret activities of the Primorska clergy in fascist Italy, one cannot but be struck by the tragic extension of oppression of rights of Slovene and Croat minorities captured at the other side of the Rapallo border in the inter-war period. The oppression which is irrepressibly leaking from the Slovene national memory while heirs of black shirts are tailoring historical facts and persistently and aggressively propagating their own "truth" with increasing confidence. Fortunately though, on both Slovene and Italian sides there are scientists courageous enough not to allow themselves to be misled by nationalistically coloured interpretations of the history of Slovene-Italian relations imposed by the daily politics. As for the painful and tragic past co-existence of two neighbouring nations in the heart of Europe, every work dealing with the history of Slovene-Italian relations in an unbiased and scientifically correct way is more than welcome.

One of these certainly is Egon Pelikan's monograph about activities of Christian Socials in Venezia Giulia in the inter-war period. The author, conducting research work within the framework of the Science and Research

Centre in Koper, is one of the leading experts for the history of Slovene political Catholicism. His master's thesis, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem (Accommodation of the Ideology of Political Catholicism in Slovenia)* (Maribor 1997), met with a wide response among the professional public. His doctoral dissertation, too, was awarded the highest grades. It was adapted for publication and resulted in the present book, dealing with activities of the Primorska clergy.

Pelikan's book is made even more interesting by the fact that it contains some first-rate archival sources, which have never been published or used for research before. They had long been hidden from the eyes of historians and many were unaware of their existence. A lion's share of the correspondence and documents that can be found in Pelikan's book come from the archives of dr. Engelbert Besednjak (1894-1968), a leading Christian Social political personality on the Italian side of the Rapallo border. Beyond doubt, Besednjak was a politician of the European format; he also was one of the leaders of the Congress of European Nationalities, where he was working together with his liberal fellow traveller, dr. Josip Wilfan. Pelikan's book dedicates an entire chapter

to these two Primorska politicians and their activities within the organisation of European minorities, thus setting the minority issues into a wider European framework.

After the downfall of the multinational Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, Primorska Slovenes, who used to enjoy relatively favourable conditions for their political and cultural development (at the constitutional level all nationalities living in the Austrian part of the monarchy had equal rights), suddenly found themselves living in a state which, in the name of a supposedly "superior" culture, started to suppress basic rights of the Slovene and Croat minorities. With the ascent of Mussolini fascists the state of affairs deteriorated further: Slovene culture homes were burnt down, newspapers and books were confiscated, the Slovene language disappeared from schools. These, together with other anti-minority acts, became part of everyday life. With the Duce's imperialistic ambitions growing, the level of aggression increased, too. First, with speeches in the parliament of Rome and attempts to intervene by the authorities, Besednjak and Wilfan tried to alleviate the situation the minority was living. However, since the end of the 1920s none of their interventions on "highest positions" bore any results.

In this difficult position, the leadership of the struggle for the preservation of the Slovene identity under the fascist boot was taken over by the Slovene clergy. Other resistance groups existed, too (liberals, TIGR, etc.); nevertheless, the so-called "Secret Christian Social Organisation" was the most efficient and tenacious of all. A lion's share of merit for its efficiency can be awarded to priests who then could lean on a strong network of ecclesiastical institutions. One of numerous reports from the archives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Kingdom of Italy, quoted by Pelikan, states that until the year 1928 Italian authorities in Venezia Giulia dismissed all Slovene officials employed in municipal administration as well as all Slovene judges, and banished or dismissed from 600 to 820 Slovene and Croat teachers! Thus, the whole Slovene lay intelligentsia shrank to approximately 50 lawyers, 15 doctors and a handful of public workers. But at the stronghold of Slovenedom 272 priests remained. In fact, they were the only ones who taught Slovenes to read and write. What fascists were most irritated by was that "the state authority cannot transfer priests, they do not have families and are in this respect financially independent."

Despite the tragic character of the situation, at least some Slovene priests managed to preserve their sense of humour. Described on the basis of police reports found in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Kingdom of Italy, Pelikan's book offers a lot of such instances. Priest Ivan Bidovec, for example, was sentenced to *confino*, or domestic exile: among other things he did, during ecclesiastical ceremonies he afforded

dressing children in white, blue and red clothes, arranging them in such a way to represent the Yugoslav flag. On Shrovetide, on the other hand, he dressed them in fascist "Balilla" uniforms to make them look like chimneysweepers, saying that this was what that uniform was most suitable for, etc.

During the first stages of their struggle for national defence, priests could count on strong support by Primorska bishops, in particular Andrej Karlin, Frančišek B. Sedej and Alojzij Fogar. After the relations between the Vatican and the Italian states warmed, however, these bishops, who had strived to preserve the use of the Slovene language in churches and during catechism classes, found themselves under huge pressure exerted by both Italian authorities and the Vatican hierarchy. Based on very interesting sources, Pelikan offers a detailed analysis of methods used by the Vatican hierarchy for the removal of bishops, who in the eyes of Italian authorities still were seen as "Austriacants". Besednjak's letters clearly evidence the proud posture these last defenders of the right to use Slovene in ecclesiastical life held. Among these the personality standing out most is that of Fogar, bishop of Trieste and Koper. Despite being in fact a Friulian, he was unselfishly fighting for the rights of Slovenes and Croats. Italian authorities were highly irritated by his personnel policy. In the parish of Lindar in the municipality of Pazin, for example, he appointed a retired Croat priest, Filipič, who should have been sent to *confino* to Sardinia. After that, to great anger of fascists, Filipič "ran his parish as if they still were under Austria."

The "adaptation" of standpoints of the Vatican politics, bending to the pressures of the fascist regime regarding the use of the Slovene language in ecclesiastical life, on one hand led to a sense of resignation among Slovene priests in Venezia Giulia, but on the other hand it made their viewpoints grow more radical. In the first years after the annexation to the Italian state, they supported loyalty to the kingdom, but according to Pelikan's findings, in the second half of the 1920s irredentist mentality prevailed. This was realised by their fascist persecutors who adopted a stricter policy against disobedient priests. On the basis of documents, the author of the book lists a number of cases of legal measures taken against priests and laymen belonging to the Secret Christian Social Organisation, which shed a very negative light on the supposed "expellers of barbarians". The book clearly shows who in fact acted as barbarians. Let me just mention the tragic fate of organist and choir-master Lojze Bratuž, loathed by the fascists for educating young Slovene organists and in this way preserving Slovene songs in churches. The punishment for his love for the Slovene language was cruel: Bratuž was dying in terrible pain for several weeks of poisoning with waste motor oil he had to drink on order of the fascists!

Despite torture and cruel methods of interrogation,

Italian police failed in the attempts to break the Secret Christian Social Organisation, Pelikan found out. Reasons for their failure can be traced in the ignorance of foreign languages, a poor knowledge of Slovene mentality, superficiality, and centralised police administration. The author quotes that some documents of Italian agents even denoted Besednjak and Wilfan as members of the Slovak (!) minority.

In his book, Pelikan invites us to travel into the backstage of the policy of the Yugoslav state towards the Slovene and Croat minorities in Italy. Despite antagonisms within the state of Karadjordjevići, Primorska Slovenes saw it as "the only possibility for the annexation to the motherland". The Italian state, of course, played the card of national contrasts in the multinational Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which to a significant extent facilitated its policy of penetration into the Balkans. For this reason especially, the Slovene minority in Italy "emphasised Yugoslav unity", Pelikan found out. In relation to Italy, Yugoslavia was politically and economically in a subordinate position. That is why, when minority protection was discussed, its diplomats kept returning from Rome empty-handed. It is true, however, that at least in terms of financial means the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was quite generous to the minority, which had the right to draw important financial means from special Belgrade funds.

Pelikan's book clearly shows the important role Besednjak held on the Belgrade court, too. King Aleksandar deeply trusted him and it also seems he would take into consideration advice given to him by this leading personality of Primorska Christian Socials. Besednjak often acted as the intermediary between the monarch and the leader of the Slovene People's Party, dr. Anton Korošec. This is witnessed by highly interesting documents the author included at the end of the book. Among these, there are Besednjak's reports of visits of Korošec on the island of Hvar, in a time when the initiative for the establishment of a state-wide Yugoslav Radical Union, which after coming into power would start the democratisation process and reorganisation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was taking off. Apart from these, Pelikan's book offers numerous notes, drawing attention to differences between the profile of catholic politicians in terms of their ideas and politics on both sides of the Rapallo border.

During the presentation of his book at the Nova revija Club, the author pointed out the fortune he had to have had access to Besednjak's archives. He added that anyone having such rich sources at his disposal could write a nice story. This statement bears witness to the modesty of the author. After reading this voluminous, interesting and instructive book we need to say we were the lucky ones because these rich archival materials came into the hands of – Egon Pelikan.

Andrej Rahten

Gianni Oliva: FOIBE. LE STRAGI NEGATE DEGLI ITALIANI DELLA VENEZIA GIULIA E DELL'ISTRIA.
Milano, Mondadori, 2002, pp. 206

Gianni Oliva, docente presso la Scuola d'applicazione d'Arma di Torino e storico di successo, è solo l'ultimo (per ora) di una lunga serie di autori, più o meno autorevoli (e Oliva appartiene a quelli più autorevoli) che si sono cimentati con il tema, divenuto oramai di moda, delle c.d. foibe. Per Oliva non è questo il primo contatto con il tema in questione, visto che gli ha già dedicato ampio spazio nel suo "La resa dei conti", in cui si occupa delle esecuzioni (più o meno sommarie) di fascisti avvenute in Italia alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale. Il libro che abbiamo ora di fronte è in pratica una riproposizione ampliata di tesi ed argomenti già presenti nel libro dedicato al *redde rationem* del 1945.

Oliva affronta la questione delle esecuzioni avvenute nella Venezia Giulia dopo l'8 settembre del 1943 e soprattutto dopo la fine della guerra dando ampio spazio alle vicende storiche antecedenti le foibe, a cui sono dedicati ben quattro dei sette capitoli del libro. Vengono così esaminate in successione la storia della Venezia Giulia nell'epoca della prima annessione all'Italia e del-