

## Book Reviews

*Leonid Fëdorov* by Aleksej Judin. Milan: RC Edizioni La Casa di Matriona, 1999. 173 pp., 16,000 lire.

*Juliya Danzas* by Giovanna Parravicini and Sergej Stratanovskij. Milan: RC Edizioni La Casa di Matriona, 2001. 149 pp., 16,000 lire.

*Josyf Slipyi* by Ivan Choma. Milan: RC Edizioni La Casa di Matriona, 2001. 151 pp., 16,000 lire.

*Pietro Leoni* by Mara Quadri and Alessandra Rondoni. Milan: RC Edizioni La Casa di Matriona, 1999. 155 pp., 16,000 lire.

This is an excellent new paperback series in Italian sponsored by Aid to the Church in Need. The subjects of three of these biographies of outstanding witnesses are linked by their common adherence to the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church, but their origins and characters could hardly have been more different.

Both Fedorov (1879–1935) and his spiritual daughter Danzas (1879–1942) came from an Orthodox background and went on a tortuous search through many conflicting philosophies before discovering the Church Fathers. After reaching similar conclusions to those of Vladimir Solov'yev on the seniority of the Roman Catholic Church they opted to join it. Both eventually embraced the eastern rite – Danzas against her will, in obedience to Fedorov's vision of commitment to the unity of the churches. Fedorov came from a humble background in St Petersburg, Danzas from the aristocracy, with a Byzantine emperor among her direct ancestors and having become a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Alexandra.

Fedorov accepted ordination as an Orthodox priest, but with the long-term aim of studying in Rome with the Catholics; he eventually joined the Catholic Church, as the saintly Bishop Feofan Bystrov of Yamburg, who blessed his venture, had foreseen. However, he realised that because it was inextricably linked with nationalism the Polish Catholicism on offer in Russia provided no entry to the 'Church Universal'. In the Jesuit seminary of Agnani he did his utmost to familiarise fellow future priests with Russia and the riches of the eastern rite. Only through this rite, which in that period was so denigrated throughout most of the 'Uniate territory', could Russians, so he believed, be brought to embrace the Universal Church. 'We offer ourselves in sacrifice for the schism and must be prepared to bear our cross patiently', he wrote: a readiness his devout mother Lyubov' Dmitriyevna also expressed during the 1905 Revolution. Even in his days in secondary school he had already had the presentiment that Russia was teetering on the edge of an abyss, about to be rent by a revolution which would be far more violent than the French Revolution. His Italian friends later recalled his prophetic words: 'The conversion of Russia will come about only through

the red sea of the blood of its martyrs and the many and deep sufferings of its apostles' (Judin, p. 39).

Although the 1905 Edict of Toleration enabled a quarter of a million ostensibly Orthodox Ukrainians and Belorussians openly to declare their allegiance to the Catholic Church, the government still made its disapproval of the eastern rite only too clear, even controlling the confessional conduct of its subjects when they were abroad. Fedorov was told in no uncertain terms by S.D. Sazonov (later minister of foreign affairs) that once he was reordained, though it would be acceptable for him to function back in Russia as a Roman Catholic priest, he would not be allowed to use the Russian Orthodox rite.

Judin highlights the impetus furnished by the first of a number of congresses at Velehrad in Moravia in 1907 as a forum for clergy and theologians, Eastern-Rite Catholics and Orthodox from Slav cultures to reassess the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius and to endorse its prime importance. Each congress discussed key issues relating to church unity, interchurch dialogue and eucharistic theology and diverse rites were celebrated in a mutually sympathetic atmosphere. So fearful were both the Russian and Austrian governments of a resultant upsurge of panslavic unrest that the Austrian government tried to ban the second congress in 1909.

Fedorov's year preparing to take monastic vows in the impoverished and primitive Kamenica Monastery in Bosnia, chosen by his mentor the great Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, put him among people at the other end of the spectrum from his cultured converts in St Petersburg, rough peasants often abysmally ignorant of religion yet able by their simple faith and dedication to hard labour and their offices to convince and convict him of his vanity. In 1913 he emerged spiritually mature, more prepared to face what lay ahead. This was to include horrific assaults from the powers of evil, as witnessed by Danzas and her companion nun. Fedorov said that when at prayer he felt the presence of 'someone' at his elbows trying to hold him back. On one occasion, after a fearsome fracas which Danzas and a parishioner feared was a nocturnal incursion by the police, they found Fr Leonid lying senseless face downwards on the floor, icons wrenched off the walls, his rosary torn to pieces, and the great bronze crucifix, twisted into a spiral by superhuman forces, lying beside him.

Judin (Yudin), a leading Russian Catholic historian and archivist, writes from an eastern-rite standpoint; Petrine primacy, for both author and subject, is non-negotiable. The dispositions of the first diocesan synod of the refounded Eastern-Rite Catholic Church in Russia in 1917, when Fedorov was created exarch, were hardly conducive to Orthodox sympathy:

We place under the protection of our most holy sovereign Mother of God, free from original sin, all the territory of Great Rus' and all the dioceses existing there, which are at present occupied by schismatics. We beseech the Most High to make these sees obedient to the Church of Ancient Rome, Mother of all orthodox churches. (Judin, p. 87)

As Fedorov also conceded, however, 'The revolution has shaken Russian souls to the depths; its has become intolerable to live in an atmosphere of division and hostility.'

Danzas wrote:

A tempestuous crisis in faith is developing. Profound spiritual questioning is to be found everywhere ... . The revolution has put at the forefront of Russian society the problem of the complete separation of the state from

the church, not only in the juridical sense but in the sense of society's complete estrangement from Christianity ... a complete break with the thousand-year-old tradition. One can't remain aloof from it. The decision to break completely from the church or on the contrary to foster and reestablish vital links with it can be taken only by sounding the very basis of religious needs and the problems of church unity associated with them. (Parravicini, pp. 59–60)

It says much for Fedorov's personal charisma and integrity that his pleas for rapprochement between East and West awoke a warm response among some Orthodox: from the embattled Patriarch Tikhon himself, from Moscow circles and from Old Believers. In 1922 former government members A.D. Arbuzov and S. Urusov courageously commended the suitability of the Russian eastern rite for proponents of eventual union.

Under the short-lived Provisional Government in 1917, when the status and freedom of the Catholic Church was at last guaranteed, the atmosphere was so conducive to genuine, unhampered interchurch relations that an association to promote the reunion of the churches was created. Its sessions opened on 11 June in St Petersburg but ceased by the spring of 1918 because of circumstances beyond its control. In spite of the absence of Latin representatives, the frank dialogue tackled thorny issues, and although it eventually reached an impasse, careful reexamination of it would provide a salutary exercise for the present Orthodox and Catholic disputants as the issues and tensions are just as relevant today. Fedorov laid the blame for its failure on blatant proselytism by certain Polish priests. Judin puts the onus for its failure on Michel d'Herbigny, responsible for Vatican Ostpolitik during the 1920s. Although d'Herbigny recognised the key role of the eastern rite in Rome's projected 'spiritual conquest' of Russia he intended to bypass the newly revived Greek Catholic churches of Galicia in Ukraine. Perhaps the cruellest blow Fedorov suffered during his Calvary between 1926 and 1929 in Solovki was when he was informed on d'Herbigny's behalf in 1928 (by Mgr Bolesław Sloskans, apostolic administrator of Mogilev-Minsk and a fellow-prisoner) that the Russian exarchate had been revoked, at least for the time being. Fedorov had earlier expressed his bitterness at Rome's latinising tendencies and at its ignorance and lack of appreciation of Orthodox culture. 'We orientals are not considered strangers (that would be too much) but as embarrassing, inconvenient relatives who through their lack of education are not welcomed to sit at table along with respectable guests ... but relegated to the kitchen' (Judin, p. 112).

D'Herbigny's conviction that the Russian Orthodox Church was in its death-throes and that Russia was ripe for conversion by a huge army of foreign missionaries inflicted grievous wounds on Russian religious and national sensitivities. Judin sees in Fedorov and his apostolic charitableness a precursor of the approach of the Second Vatican Council to ecumenism and its sensitivity to the need for inculturation of Catholic ideas on Russian soil. Fedorov's mission did not cease in the Gulag and exile where he proved capable of convincing deeply committed Orthodox like Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky.

Danzas offers a less attractive subject than Fedorov, yet provides an engrossing tale. She was a mass of contradictions, formidable, intellectually brilliant, proud, rated by some who knew her in exile in Italy as 'an impossible personality', 'redolent with bitterness'. Even Fedorov felt himself incapable of providing her with the guidance she needed and merited, as an unquiet soul, both for her faults and her immense

spiritual potential. Educated at the Sorbonne, an expert on gnosticism, a polemicist, she wrote books and articles on religion and philosophy, and also memoirs: *Bagne rouge: Souvenirs d'une prisonnière au pays des Soviets* (published anonymously by Juvisy, Seine-et-Oise, 1935); and *L'imperatrice tragica e il suo tempo* (Mondadori, Milan, 1943). Of particular interest is her tribute to her friend Maxim Gorky, to whose hidden ministry of compassion she owed her early release from prison.

Searching for faith, she took advice and resorted to visiting the aged *starets* Aleksii in the hermitage of Zosima near the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery. He had an appalling vision of her soaked in blood and embarking on a long, hard road, but predicted that the Lord would sustain her. The following year, 1915, while directing a Red Cross depot in Lithuania, she emerged bloodsoaked but unscathed after an explosion that flung her several feet and blew off the head of the lad to whom she had just offered sugar. It was this escape that finally impelled her to devote her life to God. She eventually took vows secretly as Sister Giustina, but the course of her life did not permit her normal monastic community support. Her interior monasticism was repeatedly questioned and looked askance at, above all during her long years of exile in the West from 1934 to 1941, because it had no outward form; but it furnished the secret interior core of her relationship with Christ. The conduct of the 'lady of the court' in Solovki between 1928 and 1932 among prostitutes, thieves, filth and epidemics as slave labourer and hospital orderly was as calm and impeccable as it had been in front of three empresses. With extreme restraint, Danzas hardly ever referred to her vocation in the writings that remain, but it enabled her to pass morally unscathed, pure and committed, through captivity and the *via crucis* of incomprehension and loneliness in the West. There she encountered pettiness, a refusal to look beyond the narrow prescriptions of canon law and a complete lack of vision in the administrative circles of the church on which she had pinned her hopes. The Catholic Church seemed to her to be bent on quenching any warm feelings Orthodox might have entertained towards it, and any desire for church union.

Most movingly, Fedorov and Danzas found each other again in Solovki in 1929. In the antireligious museum there, where Danzas was curator, their uneasy relationship was strangely reversed when in front of a deconsecrated altar Fedorov broke down in tears and revealed to her the depth of his own Calvary, the apparent failure of his mission of unity. 'They reenacted the sufferings of St Mary and St John at the foot of Christ's cross, experiencing ... a true realisation of the dawn of the Resurrection in the mysterious embrace of the crucified' (Parravicini, p. 21). Danzas handed him the abandoned vestments of the martyred Metropolitan Filip of St Petersburg, speaking words of consolation, as to Filip's successor, and saw his face transfigured (Judin, pp. 160–62).

Fedorov died in exile in Vyatka in the house of a railway official named Kalinin. While the family were praying a dove flew in through the half-open door and after tracing three circles over his coffin flew out again. Fedorov was rightly beatified during Pope John Paul's visit to Ukraine in 2001. He was the stuff of which saints are made, and Danzas survived to be one of the prime witnesses.

Yosyf Slipyi and Petro Leoni, a Jesuit from Forlì in Italy, were far less complex characters. Slipyi's faith, formidable intellect and iron will endowed him with a dignity that impressed those who encountered him during his 18 years in the Gulag. Choma, bishop of Patara, procurator for his church at the Vatican and postulator for Slipyi's beatification, provides a succinct introduction to his life and the essential Ukrainian church background for the less informed reader, but little more. Apart from glimpses of an exhausted, feeble, famished old man, neither Slipyi nor his biographer

let us get into his inner personality.

He was virtually at death's door on several occasions, and his survival was almost miraculous. The Lithuanian Fr Alfonsas Svarinskas provided penicillin for his tuberculosis; fellow-prisoners in a night convoy pushed him to safety when they were almost mown down by a fast train; a fellow-prisoner rescued him when he was collapsing in the snow. Despite his infirmity, throughout his incarceration he never spared himself in maintaining religious life, worship and links with his flock, and even – with the permission of the authorities! – worked on his monumental history of the Universal Church in Ukraine, seven volumes in manuscript, while in exile in Siberia between 1953 and his rearrest in 1958. The authorities then shifted him relentlessly from one camp to another to break his will – in vain. Eventually, in 1960, they paid him the highest possible tribute. They offered him the Moscow Patriarchate!

His release was sudden and unexpected – indeed his niece and greatniece, informed that their food parcels had been returned, assumed that he was dead until they received a telegram from him from Moscow. His resurgence in exile as leader and inspirer of the Ukrainian community was amazing. After the absorbing and harrowing record of his captivity, this section of the book is perfunctory, with no details of any other aspects of his life or his final illness. Choma chooses to make no mention of the tensions between him and the Vatican about the recognition he sought for Ukraine's unique ecclesiastical status and nationhood. In a final summing-up on the rebirth of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and its subsequent relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, Romano Scalfi, director of *Russia Cristiana*, and himself an eastern-rite priest, makes mention of the censures from at least three outstanding Orthodox intellectuals (Vladimir Poresh, Vladimir Zelinsky and the late Bishop Mikhail Mud'yugin) of their own church's involvement in the suppression of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Quadri, a senior editor for *Russia Cristiana*, and Rondini, editor of the Forlì diocesan newspaper, throw light on Leoni, little known outside Italy and Canada, where he worked with the Russian mission in Montreal until his death in 1995 following his release in 1955 after ten years in the Gulag. They rely heavily on Leoni's own testimony, *Spia del Vaticano!* (Rome, 1959), trenchantly corroborated by his personal NKVD file and tributes from fellow-prisoners. Leoni stands alongside Slipyi as a priest of unshakeable conviction, fortitude and ability. His readiness to witness to his faith, whatever the circumstances, left interrogators and camp staff stunned, as when he equated Soviet rule with fascism and accused the Soviet authorities of reducing peasants to the status of 'glebe serfs' again, or when he refused to endorse Soviet 'peace' policy along with the rest of the prisoners, shouting 'Better to be blown up by an atomic bomb than stay in this blissful paradise we find ourselves in!' When asked for the names of his collaborators in Odessa, he accused the party bigwigs there!

This biography throws light on a period of Soviet history not well known to English readers, between 1942 and 1945, when Leoni ministered as an Italian army chaplain in Ukraine (in Dnepropetrovsk and Odessa) during the German occupation and subsequent Russian counteroffensive. It benefits from the admirable sensitivity with which the Catholic mission from the *Russicum* from 1935 to 1941 is placed in the context of its period. Even today it is not possible to say exactly how many of its ardent young missionaries managed to enter Russia clandestinely or what happened to them. The fact that some at least broke down under pressure, like the Polish-American Jesuit Walter Ciszek and the Frenchman Jean Nicolas, Leoni's parish colleague in Odessa, who betrayed him, underlines the weakness of their generous but

ingenuous idealism and their ignorance of the real nature of the ideology and of the deadly psychological mechanisms it could resort to. The ardent desire for the unity of the separated churches, which animated priests like the Slovak Vendelin Javorka, was in practice soon reduced to Catholic expansionism. The missionaries were initially convinced that Russians, utterly disenchanted by the divisions that rent their church, were ready to convert *en masse* to Rome. Leoni's encounter with things as they really were and with persecution enlarged his partial vision and threw him back on his ultimate resource – his unshakeable faith in Christ. In front of the NKVD Leoni begged Nicolas for absolution and granted it to him in his turn. Throughout his eight years in Vorkuta he carried out a priestly ministry even when ill in the infirmary, and he continued similar pastoral care, together with prison work, in Canada. As with Danzas and Slipyi, return to the West, in his case in the era of détente, represented a kind of purgatory of misunderstanding. He remained combative and uncompromising to the end, making use of a broadcast to commend a Quebec Catholic hospital that refused to carry out the new government policy of sterilisation of women for specific medical reasons.

These biographies not only provide invaluable records of heroism, but also show how painful the adaptation to changing ecclesiastical, political and moral conditions in the West has been for those who survived.

JANICE BROWN

*Heavenly Serbia: from Myth to Genocide* by Branimir Anzulovic. London: Hurst and Co., 1999. 233 pp.

I think that the Kosovo covenant of the Serbian people, that is, their general orientation toward, and in critical situations definite commitment to, the Heavenly kingdom, and not to an earthly one, must be pointed out as a special characteristic of the spiritual life of the Serbs. (p. 5)

Thus wrote Bishop Atanazije Jevtić in 1991, in justification of Serbian aggression in Slovenia and Croatia. Anzulovic traces how, for the Serbs, myth eventually led to genocide. Anzulovic is described as 'an independent scholar' and American university lecturer. He patently lacks the experience on the ground which made the Dutch anthropologist Ger Duijzings (in *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* in the same series) so impressive, and his approach to the distortions of myth and theology is polemical. Nevertheless he provides invaluable coverage and ample quotations from a wide range of sources in various Slav languages, including epic poetry and historical records and observations, to prove his case and familiarise the general reader with the key concepts underlying the Serb psyche and the ideology which has spread carnage throughout the former Yugoslavia.

*The Mountain Wreath* by the Montenegrin prince-bishop Njegoš furnishes a salutary illustration of how religion may be distorted by the spirit of tribalism. It is not comfortable reading, particularly for Christians searching for moral guidance in the writings and utterances of Serb church leaders and theologians. Almost without exception saints venerated by the Serbs turn out to have been steeped in violence.

Patriarch Gavriilo, glorifying the 1942 Belgrade coup d'état, after lauding Njegoš states that

The same Kosovo spirit inspired Karadjordje and Milos [Obrenović] to build a new foundation for the Serbian state, which rose ever higher, and this clearly proves that the entire ascent of the Serbian people in history was won only and exclusively by the sword, in a sea of spilled blood and countless victims, which means that without all this there is no victory, as there is no resurrection without death. (p. 17)

Orthodox neophytes who avidly read the devotional sermons of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović might be well advised to consider some of his pronouncements on war as a tool for achieving 'holy' national unity, for example: 'War is the basis of every art and every higher virtue and ability'. He regretted that 'his generation had not seen a war'. Anzulovic's graphic sources prove that there was little that was new in the conduct of Serb forces in the recent wars.

Anzulovic maintains that the present Serbian Orthodox hierarchy constitutes a major obstacle to a healthier political climate: 'the people who should represent the moral conscience of the nation and condemn the crimes committed in the attempt to create a Greater Serbia are instead ardent nationalists and inciters of xenophobia' (p. 177). He does not quote Radovan Karadžić's chilling revelation, recorded by Paul Mojzes and Radmila Radic: 'Not a single important decision was made without the Church.' Perhaps Anzulovic might have expanded more on church declarations in which the (perceived) sufferings of the Serb nation were paralleled with those of the Hebrew nation and even with those of Christ at Golgotha, and on the cult of supposed Serb victimhood. There is patently a major problem to be addressed in the basic education of Serbian Orthodox clergy and it is here that contacts with their more enlightened Orthodox coreligionists and theologians must play a key role.

Paradoxically, the raising of faith to the status of a compulsory constituent of Serbian nationalism in practice went hand in hand with utter disparagement of religion by state and civil authorities and by the population in general. Vladimir Solov'yev pointed out a correlation between religious indifference and the political use of the church: 'The religious indifference of the Serbs is as well known as their mania for using Orthodoxy as a political weapon in their fratricidal struggle against the Catholic Croats.' Marian Zdziechowski, a well-travelled Pole, comparing Serbs with Poles and Russians in 1909 said that he regarded the Serbs as the most irreligious of all the peoples he had visited, with no will 'to lift their thoughts to the area of the absolute'. The author of a study of tombstone inscriptions in western Serbia in the 1970s noted empty churches and peasants who habitually blasphemed God, cursed the saints and mocked priests (pp. 27–28). Meanwhile the latter in general seemed hardly to rise above the level of their flocks.

Possible accusations that Anzulovic is biased in his selection of the Serbs for particular criticism, when Catholics and Muslims have at times shown equal brutality during the recent wars, are answered by the longer view he takes in making illuminating comparisons between Serbian Orthodox and other literary traditions. Croat and Hungarian epics on key events such as the 1566 siege of Sziget by the army of Suleiman the Magnificent, such as *Szigeti veszedelem* (*The Siege of Sziget*) by the Hungarian Miklós Zrinyi, *Osman* by the Croat Ivan Gundulić and *Odiljenje sigetsko* (*The Sziget Farewell*) by the Slovene Pavao Ritter Vitezović may commemorate bloody events, but unlike the Serbian epics they do not demonise the enemy, but pay tribute to Turks and Muslims. 'The conflict between the two approaches, that is, between the assimilationist nature of Serbian national ideologies and the integrative character of Croatian national thought, remained a constant in the period preceding

the formation of Yugoslavia and throughout its existence.’ (p. 27) In the literature lauded by the Serbs and their clergy he finds a primitive obsession with death, revenge and brutality and an utter contempt for women and the weak, while of respect for the other and of Gospel precepts such as forgiveness there is not a trace. Paganism has not been suppressed. The cult of Vid, a pre-Christian Slavic sun and war god associated with the midsummer solstice, was exploited in the nineteenth century to symbolise the triumph of the Dinaric pagan heroic ethos and wedded to imperial ambitions – as it was again in Kosovo by Milošević. Anzulovic is rightly scathing in his condemnation of the conduct of the western powers in the recent conflict, as for instance when Mitterand endorsed the Vid cult on his visit to Sarajevo in 1992. Fortunately Anzulovic is able to discover critical voices from among Serb historians. Miodrag Popović wrote prophetically in 1977: ‘As a permanent state of mind the Vid’s Day cult can be fatal to the people unable to extricate themselves from its pseudo mythical and pseudo historical webs. Through them, contemporary intellect and spirit can experience a new Kosovo; an intellectual and ethical defeat.’ (p. 85)

Tantalisingly, Anzulovic mentions Vlachs who took refuge in the Dinaric highlands and who probably constitute the nucleus of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro (p. 43). That it is the Vlach obsession with death which underpins Serb folklore is a theory that other Balkan analysts have broached. In eastern Serbia near the Danube Vlach culture is still very much in evidence. A priest Anne Kindersley met in the 1970s found ministry among them very tough; he said they rarely called on him even for funerals, as they had performed their own rituals first.

In this stimulating work Anzulovic concludes that it is of vital importance to recognise the validity of the concept of original sin and the capacity for evil that lurks in every human being.

JANICE BROWN

*The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* by Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch. New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999. 351 pp.

For years Jonathan Luxmoore has covered church affairs in Eastern Europe for *The Tablet* and other publications, contributing articles to Keston Institute’s journal *Religion, State & Society*. Jolanta Babiuch is a lecturer at the Institute of Sociology at Warsaw University. Both, thus, are eminently qualified to take up the subject of the politics of religion in Eastern Europe, and both have especially deep knowledge about Polish affairs.

Both for the foregoing reason and because of the sheer numerical preponderance of Polish Catholics within the Central and East European context, it comes as no surprise that the book is, to some extent, a book about Catholicism in ‘Poland and the others’. Not only that, but the discussion, which ranges over the entire twentieth century, is, to a considerable extent, presented from the perspective of Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II). We learn, for example, that at the age of 15 Karol Wojtyła joined a conservative school association with ties to Roman Dmowski’s nationalist *Endecja* party, and that, as a 38-year-old priest, he and a group of his students had turned up at a local church in their swimsuits, stirring the parish priest to complain to the bishop.

We learn about Wojtyła's reactions to the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and about the publication of his book *The Acting Person* in 1969, in which he undertook to reply to the Polish Marxist theorist Adam Schaff. The authors by no means restrict themselves to singing Wojtyła's praises, however, arguing, for example, that John Paul's 1991 encyclical *Centesimus annus* 'distorted the relationship between socialism and liberalism' in Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*, 'failed to make sensible distinctions between socialism past and present ... [and] distorted Leo XIII's conception of State and society ...' (p. 308).

But the book is, nonetheless, much more than just an account of Wojtyła's life and reactions. It is a record of the Vatican's efforts to cope with the challenge posed by communism in Eastern Europe. Based on extensive research in at least five languages, it makes a powerful indictment of clerics such as László Cardinal Lékai of Esztergom (Hungary), who were prepared to reach compromises with the communists in the hope of taking 'small steps' forward. The authors believe that the flexible determination of Stefan Wyszyński and the tough and courageous honesty of John Paul II were, both in the short term and in the long term, more effective in defending the interests of the Catholic Church.

There are some interesting tidbits presented along the way. The reader learns, for example, that Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York was accused by the Yugoslav government (during the 1946 trial of Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb) of having arranged for Washington to cut aid to the Tito regime, and charged, during the trial of Archbishop Mindszenty in Hungary in 1949, with having plotted to restore the Habsburg dynasty. Or again, the authors note that in March 1961, when the Hungarian authorities rounded up some 200 priests for conducting 'illegal' religious instruction among young people, the church issued a meek statement to the effect that 'irresponsible persons' should not use the church for 'seditious acts' (p. 116). Or again, the authors reveal that the East German secret police had an agent inside the Vatican during Paul VI's papacy, who passed along 'exact details' concerning the conclave which elected Wojtyła (p. 232). The authors also capture, as well as I have found anywhere, the excitement that overwhelmed Poles when Wojtyła was elected pope in 1978.

The authors are not impressed by arguments to the effect that the Soviet KGB was behind the attempt on Pope John Paul II's life in 1981, and while their bibliography does not list Paul Henze's thought-provoking book *The Plot to Kill the Pope*, the authors note that, when KGB archives were opened to public scrutiny, there was no documentation found there of any conspiracy to do so.

The book is highly readable, and is highly recommended.

SABRINA P. RAMET