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Unsilenced (Neumlčna) by Vaclav Vasko

by Radomir Maly

Translation [by James Satterwhite, Bluffton College] of article from the Czech newspaper Lidova Kultura from 19 August, 1991.

Two volumes of modern Church history, written by Vaclav Vasko and entitled *Unsilenced (Neumlčna)*, have been published by the Church publishing house Zvon. What is remarkable is that, although the author is not a professional historian, he manifests all the marks of professionalism. What is involved here is the first complex study of both the Nazi and the Communist persecutions of the Catholic Church, with attention also given to the persecution of other Christian denominations.

Vasko's objectivity and his strict critical choice of sources could serve as an example for all historians of the modern age. The book's captivating reportage keeps the reader's interest despite the rigorous demands of such a wide cultural and religious range of vision. The value of this book lies in the fact that the younger generation (and today not only the younger generation) lacks the least bit of knowledge about political developments concerning the Church in modern times. What works there have been on the subject have been fragmentary. Thanks to Vaclav Vasko it is now possible to obtain information that is indeed complex and perfectly compiled. It will no longer be possible to excuse or make apology for one's ignorance of the suffering of thousands of God's servants with the facile remark that "no literature exists on the subject."

The book should not only be read by those who are interested in the history of the Church during and after the war, but also by politicians. It could even be said that it should be read especially by politicians, particularly those who deal with the issue of Czech-Slovak relations. Vasko is half Czech, half Slovak, and growing up spent time in both Slovakia and in the Czech lands. His outlook is not encumbered, therefore, with nationalism from either side. His book, *Unsilenced*, provides a clear view of the Slovak People's Party [of WWII], of Tisa and the Slovak State without trying to justify that which cannot be justified. At the same time it challenges unjust stereotypes and cliches from the Czech side. Vasko teaches Czechs how to understand the Slovak point of view--a view which to the Czechs often seems to be absurd and full of anger--as being the result of a separate mentality, a separate history, as well as the consequence of mistakes of Czech policies toward Slovakia under the First Republic [the interwar years], the Communist period, and, unfortunately, in the present also. In this way he brings the Czechs closer to the Slovaks, and in so doing contributes more to Czech-Slovak reciprocity than anyone else. He demonstrates objectively that Czech-Slovak solidarity is only possible and conceivable on a Christian basis, one that is dedicated to the common suffering of martyrs from both the Nazi and Communist eras. Throughout Vasko's work like a golden

thread are woven examples worthy of imitation, and, let us hope, of early beatification: Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Beran, Archbishop Josef Matocha, Bishops Jan Vojtassak and Jozef Kmetko, Abbots Augustin Machalka, Jozef Tajovsky, and many others.

Vasko's book ends with the year 1950. Let us hope that further volumes will follow, and that they will be as exhaustive, as readable, and of such high quality as the first two volumes were. May God richly bless the author!