Pier Luigi Guiducci
extracts from:

- Did Jesus of Nazareth exist?
- Your father and I have been searching for you
- Witnesses? Peter and Paul in Rome
  - In time of trial
  - For the faith, for the brothers
  - Dossier Stepinac
- Did Jesus of Nazareth exist?
- Your father and I have been searching for you
- Witnesses? Peter and Paul in Rome
- In time of trial
- For the faith, for the brothers
- Dossier Stepinac
Pier Luigi Guiducci
extracts from:

- Did Jesus of Nazareth exist?
- Your father and I have been serching for you
  - Witnesses? Peter and Paul in Rome
  - In time of trial
  - For the faith, for the brothers
  - Dossier Stepinac
Professor Pier Luigi Guiducci teaches Church History at the Diocesan Centre of Theology for the Laity (Pontifical Lateran University) and other universities. He is popular in Italy and abroad for his books (over 100), his monographs, his lectures and his consultations (Czech Republic, Spain, Croatia, Germany et al). Pier Luigi Guiducci often takes part to TV and radio shows as well (RAI World, TV 2000). He has received a lot of recognition in different countries for his scientific work, which started 45 years ago.
ANCIENT CHURCH HISTORY
NOTEBOOKS
DID JESUS OF NAZARETH EXIST?
Research, non-Christian sources, comparisons

SUMMARY NOTES

Jesus of Nazareth’s Story

In the first years of Christianity, nobody cared about Jesus of Nazareth but his disciples. The reasons are quite obvious. Judea was a prefecture of Roman Syria, which included, apart from Judea, Galilee, Samaria and Idumea. Moreover, the occupiers were not interested in the domestic religious issues. The duties were not much, but they were essential: to pay taxes (that’s why the government promoted population census), to not rebel against Roman authority (otherwise legions were mobilised). Such a tendency is confirmed by the fact that Jewish issues were only an annoying problem to Roman emperors; one of the many nuisances in the Middle East.

The situation exacerbated during the Jewish-Roman wars.
The first (66-70) began under Nero and finished under Vespasian (cit.) The key event was the destruction of the second Temple of Jerusalem by Titus’s (Vespasian’s son) legions.

The second (115-117), also known as Kitos War, concerned the diasporic cities. It started and finished under Trajan.

The third (132-135), led by Simon Bar Kokhba (Bar Kokhba) started and finished under Hadrian.

**Christianity-Judaism**

In that context, for a quite long time, Christianity was considered an irrelevant branch of Judaism. An “inner” issue. The historians of the time focused on other things: on the emperors, on the inheritance struggles, on Roman expansionism (and the related problems), on the local conflicts and on the dynastic ones; and on the philosophical schools of thought (and the harsh debates between different schools.)

The history of a *tektón* (carpenter) son, who lived
in a small village of Judea\(^1\) for thirty years and who was sentenced to a shameful death after a short public life, was hard to consider important. Jesus remained a marginal Jew\(^2\), nothing more.

**The anti-Christianity Phases**

After Jesus’s death, once the Christianity began to spread, there was, in different phases and in different geographical areas, a series of anti-Christianity reactions. Among the consequences, various Christian sites were radically and systematically destroyed. The Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem), for example, was destroyed twice, and many Northern African dioceses faced huge difficulties.

*The Holy Sepulchre remained almost untouched until 135 AD, when Hadrian razed Jerusalem to the ground after a riot. In the attempt to reaffirm pagan worship and to erase the developing Christianity,*

---

1 Nazareth, inhabited since the Bronze Age, has never been mentioned in Jewish sources before the 3\(^{rd}\) century. This highlights how marginal it was at the time, both in Judea and Galilee.

the emperor destroyed those places that were linked to Christ’s Passion, replacing them with temples dedicated to pagan gods. Under the Muslim dominion, the site (not only the church, but also what remained of the Sepulchre) was almost completely demolished by the caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (1009 AD.)

**Emerging Data**

In the light of what has been said, and following the path of the historical significance of Jesus, a few considerations can be made:

1) Currently, only a few authors express their doubts on the historical significance of Christ. Today, there is the trend to study the sources that can provide some evidence of his existence. There is, then, a wide consensus among the scholars about Jesus’s Galilean origins, his baptism by John the Baptist, his preaching activity, the existence of a group of disciples, the dispute in the temple and the crucifixion.

2) There is an attempt to trace the origin of the historical Jesus and of his preaching, also by
using critical-historical, literary-historical and sociological methods. In this way, people tend to separate the passages considered devoid of alterations from those allegedly modified as an afterthought. The implementation of such criteria, which differ from one another, is not categorically mechanical, but it takes into account different factors and degrees of probability. Furthermore, they are used in a converging way: “cum plurima currencunt, maiora sunt indicia.”

3) The “Jesus issue” no longer seems to be, at least in several scientific environments, a taboo subject. Nowadays, many Jews and Muslims partake in interreligious meetings on Christ, whose historical importance they now recognise freely. In March 2015, the CCT (Central Chinese Television) broadcasted a 45-minute documentary about Jesus, describing him as “the man who changed human history.”

YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU...

The Holy Family of Nazareth. Three callings, three yeses to God.

SUMMARY NOTES

Understanding family dynamics is never easy, let alone when it deals with going back in time, to the first century, and when the family is very “special”: the Holy family of Nazareth, for example. For this reason, it takes patience and humility in order to bear in mind two different aspects. On the one hand, there is the idea that the Holy Family deserves a special attention, and for different reasons. First, because they are not “common” people, because their whole story is not “common”. Moreover, there exist too many “theological” interpretations and the historical proofs are weak, especially the written ones, because they could have been manipulated over the years. Then, the “historical Jesus” is different from the “religious Jesus.”

On the other hand, there is the presumption that “everything” is clear, that the Gospels are perfectly
understandable. Archaeological discoveries prove that the different traditions are well-founded. In addition, what is important in the Gospels is the core message, not the details.

At this point, we have uphill roads before us, bearing in mind that non-Catholic scholars have interpreted the “Jesus issue” in different ways.

My “Holy Scripture” teacher, Mgr. Salvatore Garofalo (1911-1998) used to say, in his Neapolitan style, that in order to understand the Gospels, one needs to start from the end and then to go back gradually. He meant that what Matthew, Luke, John and Mark described had at its core the Passion of Jesus, his death and his resurrection. It all starts with those events. It is a three-period story: future (the missionary activity of the Church), past (verification of the “proofs” and of the “memories”); and present (witnesses of the “Resurrection”, of the new life in Christ). In that context, Jesus, Mary and Joseph “abandon” their usual, “devotional” position, and acquire a stronger, propulsive force. Jesus is the emblem of “contradiction.” He is not a passive character, and he is not the frantic protagonist of a troubled story. He is the “witness” of the Father.
He is the founder of a Church. He is an entity that keeps operating over the millennia.

Mary is not a “silent woman”, a woman who hides herself, who does not see, talk or hear. She is Jewish, though, and when it is necessary, she take on her Son (“His mother said to him: ‘Son, why have you treated us like this?’”; Luke 2:48), she can be gentle to her husband (“Your father and I have been searching for you”; Luke 2:48), she can be gentle to her husband “Your father and I have been searching for you” (Luke 2:48), she can react to her widowhood, confront her relatives, have an influence on Jesus and “push” him. Moreover, she can stand at the foot of the cross, and she can impart a message of faith to the “orphan” disciples.

Joseph is not a simple, unfit to plead human being. He is a loving man who tries to find inside himself the path to understand a plan that he cannot understand completely. He is an artisan who argues, who travels for work, who gets to know different aspects of life (not always the pleasant ones). He is a Jew who goes to the synagogue, who blesses the food on his relatives’ table.

At this point, historians experience the end of a prospect; they uncover a new horizon. The idea of a
holy family, “protected from above” every minute, in every situation, and therefore “higher” than normal people, dies. Nothing is miraculous or extraordinary anymore. On the contrary, even though part of a wider, redeeming plan, a new horizon is revealed. It is a horizon that is linked to a specific time and a certain culture, conditioned by customs and habits, tied to specific laws, often uncertain and tragic in times of human darkness and bare faith. For the historians, then, it becomes harder to follow the usual directions.
WITNESSES?

Peter and Paul in Rome. Historical Evidence.
Teachings. Tragedies.

SUMMARY NOTES

It may seem strange that, after so many centuries, one restarts talking about Peter and Paul’s life in Rome. Nowadays, one may wonder why it should be necessary to retrace the movements of the two Christ’s witnesses during their missionary activity, and why it should be necessary to reflect on events that have been fully assimilated by history in general, and especially by the Church history.

A Journey

The answer can be found not only in the idea of “missionary activity”, but also in that of “witness.” These two concepts, unlike one could imagine, are not strictly related to the past, but also to God’s present, and influence directly all the believers.

1) Missionary activity means, above all, to recognise the need to express and communicate one’s faith in everyday life. In this sense, the message
is not a philosophical idea or a political theory, but something concerning a personal experience: the experience of meeting with Jesus. It deals, therefore, with the conveyance of something that joyfully describes life par excellence: God.

For this reason, there is not only one missionary journey. On the contrary, the possible paths are numerous. The message can be spread across the continents, but also in a small parish, in an office, in a hospital, or during the leisure hours…

Missionary activity, in general, does not impose a truth that diminishes or mocks others’ ideas. It does not influence, and it does not enslave others’ opinions. Missionary activity means to share life, to share a journey of charity and compassion…

2) In this context, being a witness means to take part to a common journey. The witness is not a superior man, a confident believer who scatters his truth uncritically. He is not a judge who criticises the habits of his time, but a son of God, aware that every person he meets has been redeemed by Christ’s blood.

The witness is not a teacher who wants to give lessons to his ignorant peers; he is the good and
faithful servant working in God’s vineyard, so that every soul can have the chance to experience the love of the Father, his mercy and his paternal side.

In this sense, the witness is the man of the inner joy. He is the one who can see, with his faithful eyes, apparently temporary and evanescent realities. He is someone, simple and humble, who accompanies people along the road, defending life in all of its manifestations.

3) Bearing in mind what has been said so far, it is possible to highlight a key idea: Peter and Paul’s history, their missionary activity, their testimony, their teaching and their martyrdom lead back to the meeting with the Man who still today walks down the streets among men: Jesus.

The Saviour has restored every human logic, and has preached a Gospel that shakes the submissive, the indolent, the apathetic, that makes the mighty, the warriors and the evil get off their high horses. For this reason, Peter and Paul’s experiences will always be topical. There will surely be new crosses on the Golgotha of our time, but there will always be some Jesus’s disciple willing to remind us God’s omnipotence, to create new life projects, to help those who fight for a “people-oriented” world.
IN TIME OF TRIAL

Christian Martyrs’ Testimonies in Rome between the 1st and the 4th Century

SUMMARY NOTES

Historians who venture into the detailed study of Roman martyrs of the first centuries, need to climb several walls and to go through many curvy roads. Over the years, in fact, many events have occurred that have made the verification of testimonies very demanding. Three examples can be presented:

1) When Christians were identified, tried and killed, their brothers and sisters were overwhelmed by the ongoing tragedies, and were not able to write down what was going on. This explains why information was first conveyed orally, and then in writing.

2) The conveyance of information, at the beginning of Christianity, was not easy. Some details concerned the most diverse people (itinerant
preachers, common citizens, presbyters) who, subsequently, communicated what they knew to members of other local congregations. Sometimes a bad memory, the emotional involvement of the conveyer or the fact that it dealt with second-hand information (coming itself from other sources) could twist the message.

3) The third example can be painful, but it has to be taken into account: the destruction of numerous Christian archaeological sites. That not only occurred in places that are far from Rome (e.g. Northern Africa and the Middle East) but in the Urbe as well. Building expansion in general, new streets, and underground car parks have, in many cases, destroyed or damaged catacombs and other important sites. For example, at the beginning of 1956, during the digging for the fundament of a new building in Via Dino Compagni (close to Via Latina), a catacomb was accidentally discovered. The finding was kept concealed until the building’s construction was over. Grave robbers and reinforced concrete damaged the paintings and some structures in the catacomb. The main entrance to the catacomb is now obstructed by the building, and the only way
in is a manhole in Via Latina, through which it is possible to access the two parallel tunnels.4

Another event to be remembered is what happened to the Catacombs of San Valentino (Christians began to dig galleries during the third century.) Next to the entrance, there is crypt that hosts the most interesting paintings of the entire complex – dated back to the seventh/eighth century) – which prove that the place was frequented for a long period. The paintings are in a poor state because, among other reasons, the crypt has been used as a cellar.

In such a context, two different trends have emerged, which in turn have triggered debates, controversies and contrasts.

1) On the one hand, there are those who claim that, since the historical evidence is sometimes limited, the only possible choice is to recognise that it is impossible to prove the historical validity of

some martyrs. According to them, the best thing to do is to stop investigating.

2) On the other hand, there have been attempts to reinforce the missing biographical data with historically creative (or completely fictional) accounts. For this reason, in some scientific environments, the scepticism has grown stronger, and there is the feeling that the results achieved so far are not satisfying.

Between these opposite visions, though, there is the need for a patient and gradual study. Of course, it is important not to maintain what is devoid of historical authentication but at the same time, it is fundamental to recognise that incomplete and partial data does not correspond “automatically” to the fact that it is historically unreliable.

By gently removing those structures that are aimed at catechising the believers, what remains is purely historical data, which, although meagre, constitutes an information core.⁵ The stories of the martyrs were, actually, quite simple in their

tragedy. Christians were identified and questioned. If they did not renounce their faith, they got killed. Everything happened quickly. This is documented in the reports of those days.⁶

There is, in conclusion, another aspect to take into account. Martyrs were killed because of their faith. That is for sure. Nevertheless, we do not have to think of them as fearless “heroes.” Apart from a few who managed to stay calm and to support their brothers and sisters, many martyrs showed their “being human.” They were not unperturbed. They were human beings. However, this must not lead to an easy conclusion: those who got killed for their faith cannot be considered martyrs if they did not do that on purpose.

Such a reasoning, though, is not flawless. The people who were sentenced to death never repudiated their faith. They never prayed Jupiter, nor the emperor. They did not ask to spread incense before the simulacra. They only showed what they had left: their humanity. In the brutal annihilation of the future, in the destruction of entire families,

in situations where the screams made clear what was going on, physical defeat was just the end of a worldly existence, not of a faith journey. In time of trial, tragedy can be overwhelming, one can scream to exhaustion, but that cannot erase an existential choice, a religious orientation, a faith connected to a specific name: Jesus.
FOR THE FAITH, FOR THE BROTHERS

Meaningful Elements of Roman Church. History between the 1\textsuperscript{st} and the 4\textsuperscript{th} Century

SUMMARY NOTES

After so many centuries, why should people study the history of Roman Church between the first and the fourth century? The answer is not connected to a pseudo-cultural notionism (exacerbated by the new trends, which summarise everything into multipurpose recaps), nor to the curiosity to tell a story (sometimes stimulated by the media) or a list of contrasts, misunderstandings, tensions, defensive messages, persecutions and agreements, where the gossip tries to find some confidential information.

Actually, the emerged data draw the attention on a series of key elements. Roman Church history is:

1) Characterised by humble and simple actions. The first popes lived in normal houses. The believers gave the community everything they had. People took care of the sick and welcomed the brothers who came from far places.
2) Enlightened by the “witnesses” of the Master. Paolo went to the Urbe in chains. Peter was soon identified by those who opposed the new religio.

3) Worn out by the difficulties of the missio. The first Christians had to understand the Gospel and, at the same time, they had to spread it.

4) Hindered by those who did not understand Christian “mysteries”. For Christians, it was not possible to develop a complete announcement. They needed to proceed slowly, in order to prevent confusion, misinterpretations, and the spread of heterodox doctrines.

5) Burdened by a context that was complicated for various reasons: the paganism and its rituals, the pax deorum (which implied specific rites of worship of different divinities,) the worship of emperors, the trades linked to such rituals, the moral decay, the hostility of the Jews living in the Urbe before Christians.

In this context, the first Christians in Rome had to organise in order not to create social imbalances (conflicts, disagreements), continuing at the same
to pave the way for a conversion process. In their apostolate, they were supported by some factors:

- **The concreteness of Christianity** (based not on vague theories but on a real Person. Faith implies action).

- A new school of thought in the pagan world that distances itself from some rituals and, above all, from some stories that are too human to be considered divine.

- **New monotheistic leaning**, emerging (without irrupting) in the religious sphere of Hellenism.

- **Some Jews’ will to welcome the innovations of Christianity**: the Saviour had really manifested himself.

At this point, it becomes clear that this is a history that demanded an authoritative, a planning and an organising element but that, at the same time, demanded to always bear in mind two fundamental realities: faith and brothers.

Faith was not just unity. It was life. A true believer did not follow the Gospel uniquely to learn, but to
live. He did not partake just to listen, but to convey. He did not gather with his brothers and sisters to witness the presence of God, but to share the Eucharist. He not only believed in a new way to read history, but he professed his faith.

The brothers, instead, were not a framework in the picture of celebrations, but an active part of Christ’s Church. They had been saved. They had been redeemed by the blood of God’s son. They were not strangers. They walked along the routes of God’s plan and Providence. Starting from that communion, Church became the *lumen gentium*, the sign of a superior reality, a mystery and a sacrament of salvation. Christians gradually became aware of that.

These two elements, faith and brothers, are the heritage for Christian posterity. They are not independent factors. The faith in Christ pushes the believers to be active elements of his mystical body that is the Church. At the same time, the Church stimulates to live every moment as an offering to “Him”, to his Merciful Love. In this way, *charitas* (from God) exceeds *humanitas* (human efforts) and becomes *diaconia*, which characterises the baptised men and women and beautifies the peregrine Church.
CONTEMPORARY CHURCH HISTORY VOLUMES
SUMMARY NOTES

On April 13, 1941, Pavelić arrived to Zagreb train station. He had become the *poglavnik*. He received a warm welcome. Only one person was not there: Mgr. Stepinac\(^7\). This detail may seem marginal in comparison with following happenings and more resounding events. However, behind that episode, there was a hidden element that a common reader could not notice, but not an historian. Mgr. Stepinac never liked Pavelić (his criminal past was well known in the Country, as were his extremist leanings. Besides, the Ustaše did not enjoy a good reputation.) At the same time, appearances aside, the Croatian commander considered the Archbishop an obstacle to his totalitarian plans. As further proof of this, Pavelić tried several times to send

\(^7\) *Positio, vol. III, 2, cap. XI, p. 912.*
him away from Zagreb. Moreover, it is generally known that Fascist and Nazi hierarchs had initially thought to put Maček, the farmers’ leader, at the head of the government. Both the authorities in Berlin (included German representatives working in Croatia) and in Rome (e.g. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano) were suspicious towards Pavelić. Inside the Party, he was criticised and mocked. For this reason, he was supported and monitored simultaneously. Besides, there were a few humiliations he had to suffer: the territorial annexations for the good of the Axis, the Italian protectorate, the implementation of agreements pledged before his assignment in Zagreb (included one involving a Savoy - therefore non-Croatian - monarch), the Allies’ grant to joined military operations and the dispatch of Croatian military information (Hrvatska legija, Croatian legion⁸) to the Russian Front.

Pavelić’s choices

In that context, the Croatian commander was not interested in gaining political consensus, nor in increasing the enthusiasm towards him. He did not need to involve his citizens in the many organizations that flowed in the ustaša movement\(^9\). For this reason, he outlined different plans:

1) He decided to exploit the idea of “independence” of the Croatian state. Actually, it never gained a full control of the situation. The message of “freedom”, however, increased Pavelić’s supporters, even among the Croatian population living abroad.

[...]

2) Another element that Pavelić tried to take advantage of was religion. Since he was born in Croatia, he knew that his nation’s history had been characterised by the courage and the sacrifice of many Christians.

[...]

The original strength of this choice, however, slowly faded with time. The majority of Croatian

\(^9\) Ustaše headquarters, branches, territorial offices and Ustaše youth.
Church supported Archbishop Stepinac and dissociated itself from all the sources of tragedies and death.

3) There is, in addition, a third instrument that Pavelić tried to use: the Ustaše. The ideology and the activities of this paramilitary group has been analysed by several scholars. The movement was made of violent and anti-Semitic extremists, whose aim was to overpower those who opposed them.

Among the Ustaše, there were also savage people, men pushed by an uncontrollable ardour that often turned into sadism. Some of them even took pictures of their victims. Nevertheless, Pavelić tried to present the movement as a group of valuable, disciplined and obedient soldiers. He treated the Ustaše better than he used to treat the regular army (Domobrans.)

[...]

In that context, the Poglavnik’s policies were disastrous.

[...]

33
**Monsignor Stepinac’s aversion to totalitarisms**

It was in that belligerent, aggressive and socially torn apart context that Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac operated. He showed an intransigent repulsion toward the National Socialism doctrine. Besides, he never showed any interest in establishing a friendly relationship with the Italian Fascism (the Italian army was considered as an invader occupying Croatian regions, for example Dalmatia) and never shared the German-Italian choice to put Pavelić at the head of Croatian government.

[...] 

**Disobedience**

The Archbishop had to face many adversities, coming not only from Rome, Berlin, the Ustaše or the Chetniks, but also from the Croatian Church itself. The main contrasts were due to the disobedience of some members of the clergy and to the inappropriate behaviour of some priests\(^{10}\). Since the beginning of his office, monsignor Stepinac had conveyed a clear message: the mission of the

---

Church was strictly spiritual; it had nothing to do with politics\textsuperscript{11}. Political choices were under the responsibility of public authorities. The Church could only express, if necessary, moral opinions, and it could operate in the field of charity. That idea, which was often highlighted, conveyed a specific message: the Church did not identify with the Ustaše. The communication channels with the Regime were needed exclusively to keep the parishes and the institute of social and health assistance (hospitals, orphanages, food supply, and refuges) open.

Many dissociated from that course of line. Some priests and bishops switched (through oral and written declarations) from the respect toward the State to the support to the Regime’s policies. In addition, they pledged allegiance to the Ustaše and joined their troops with terrible results. Some of them, in fact, were more than simple military chaplains. Even though they did not tarnish with inexcusable crimes, they partook (according to some sources) in meetings where the military leaders

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. Positio, vol. IV, cap. VIII, p. 448: "(...) Catholic Church had nothing to do with political parties".
discussed sanguinary and cruel strategies. Mgr. Stepinac mentioned the problem of disobedience in different speeches and letters.

[...]  

An explosive situation

In that context, Mgr. Stepinac was surrounded by an explosive situation. He decided to push (directly and indirectly) the authorities to stop the persecutions, to modify the convictions, to free the prisoners, to protect children, women and old people. Historians have found proofs of this process. Becherelli, for instance, stresses how in 1942 the Nazis accelerated the deportations of Jews because they realised that Catholic protests were slowing down the anti-Semitic policies 12. When the Archbishop realised that, despite the initiatives (governmental and not) to stop them, persecutions went on, he tightened up his complaints.

His new attitude, clearly visible in his sermons, triggered a harsh reaction from the party officials. His initiatives were frustrated, his public speeches

12 A. Becherelli, op. cit., p. 74
censored. The Archbishop was even passed over in matter of ecclesiastical issues. His letters (which had humanitarian purposes) were not taken into account. Only after Tito’s death, with the creation of new nations in the Balkan region, it was possible to identify and to spread the documents attesting the initiatives launched by the Archbishop during the War in order to help the population.

Recoverd documents. Direct interventions

As far as humanitarian interventions undertaken by the Archbishop himself are concerned, some particularly interesting documents have been found in the archives of Yugoslav secret police.

[...]

Other humanitarian interventions

Mgr. Stepinac, among all those tragedies, acted personally and through other people or Catholic institutions.

[...]

Interaction with public authorities
In the situation described, the Archbishop of Zagreb needed to dialogue with the authorities. Browsing through the documents available today, one can observe that it dealt with initiatives aimed at supporting the community.

[…] 

*Misinformation*

Moreover, there are documents that are still classified\(^\text{13}\) and the information given is often misleading. In this regard, prof. Matteo Luigi Napolitano (born in 1962) has provided an interesting contribution. He has examined a text written by Marco Aurelio Rivelli\(^\text{14}\), highlighting its flaws (apart from the intentionally sensationalist title.)

[…] “Our remarks start with how sources have been used. There is not a specific hierarchy, because


14 *M.A. Rivelli, op. cit.*
Rivelli quotes newspapers, magazines and even church bulletins among the ‘official sources’ (p. 279.)

Rivelli asserts that he has consulted documents belonging to the German Foreign Affairs Ministry, but they are limited to the reports related to the German ambassador at the Holy See, Diego Von Bergen. There is no reference to the Akten zur Deutschen Auswaertigen Politik series. Furthermore, Rivelli claims that he has consulted documents of the Italian Army Staff as well. At a first check, though, things seem to be quite different, since the Army Staff archives are no longer used.

Rivelli induces the reader to think that he has spent years doing research in the archives of Washington, yet the files related to the American archives have been quoted from published works (cf. p. 226, footnote 16).

As for the main aspects of the book, Rivelli writes (p. 16): “The first Ustaša military camp in Italy was set in Bovegno (in the province of Brescia) in 1931; followed by those in Borgotaro (Parma) and San Demetrio (L’Aquila)”. The footnote 10 states “Cf.
Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI) - Italian Diplomatic Documents (IDD), series VII, vol. V, pages 280-317.” Those pages, however, focus on a completely different topic. But there is more. Those pages deal with a very friendly meeting between Mussolini and the Yugoslav minister Radić, held in Rome on June 24, 1927 (doc. 291) and a particular proposal by the Croatian nationalists to the Italian government, which had no consequences (doc. 313.)

Footnote 76 at page 47 appears to be clearly misleading. Here is what Rivelli states: “According to the French journalist Gérard Delaloye, who quotes the historian Annie Lacroix-Riz and her essay _Le Vatican, L'Europe et le Reich_, when in prison (after the Battle of the Piave River against the Italian Army) Stepinac infiltrated Serbian environments as a spy working for the Central Powers. That was logical, since he worked for Austria-Hungary, and thanks to this activity, he secured useful relationships.”

Now, in her book Lacroix-Riz (_Le Vatican, l'Europe et Hitler_, Armand Colin, Paris 1996, p. 326-327) tells that when he was imprisoned, Stepinac
started cooperating with the Yugoslav Committee in London, supported by the Triple Entente, for which he conveyed information, in opposition to Rivelli’s claims.”

*Misleading information and concealed situations*

As for the misinformation processes, a few more things can be highlighted.

1) The Ustaša oath of allegiance did not take place before a crucifix, a knife or a bomb, as some books keep claiming. During the oath, the participants kept their right hand raised, three fingers open and two closed. Footages of the time confirm that.

2) Many authors have omitted to say that the Independent State of Croatia government could not stand Mgr. Stepinac. In the capital’s cathedral, the *Te Deum*, set in all the parishes for the establishment


16 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ECwJbfMsw0.
of the NDH (1941), was not celebrated\textsuperscript{17}. The first Croatian government did not take the oath of office in the presence of the Archbishop of Zagreb, but in front of a common priest\textsuperscript{18}.

3) The relationship between the Croatian commander and the Archbishop was always complicated. During the house arrest, referring to the \textit{poglavnik}, Mgr. Stepinac said that they disagreed on many issues, that the political leader had disappointed him on many occasions, that he had scolded the \textit{poglavnik} and that he could not understand him\textsuperscript{19}.

The \textit{poglavnik}, when in power, never visited the Archbishop, while Stepinac went to him in case of need. Only once Pavelić took part, in the cathedral, to a mass celebrated by the Archbishop. It was a requiem mass dedicated by the Italian Embassy to Amedeo, Duke of Savoy-Aosta (dead in Nairobi in 1942.) \textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Positio, vol. III, 1, cap. IX, p. 461.
\textsuperscript{18} Positio, vol. III, 1, cap. IX, p. 461.
\textsuperscript{19} Positio, vol. IV, cap. XXI, p. 702.
\textsuperscript{20} Positio, vol. III, 1, cap. IX, p. 463.
4) Documents still omit the fact that the General Eugen Dido Kvaternik explicitly asserted that there was the need to get rid of Archbishop Stepinac.

5) Several authors do not make reference to a very important thing: Pavelić repeatedly solicited the Apostolic Visitor, Mgr. Marcone to banish Stepinac from the Holy See. Once, he confessed that he hated Stepinac because he opposed Fascism, and because he took care of Jews and Serbians. He also added, “When Germany wins, Stepinac will get what he deserves.”

6) Many books do not mention that Mgr. Stepinac supported, through the Caritas, Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim prisoners, in addition to people of other races and religious beliefs.

---

Pavelić’s intrusion into ecclesiastical issue

Another aspect that is often omitted is that Pavelić interfered heavily and more than once, in issues he had nothing to do with, since they belonged to the ecclesiastical sphere.

[...]

Ustaša propaganda material

After the fall of the Independent State of Croatia, much Ustaša propaganda material was used by Tito’s regime to “show” the “peculiar” support given by the Archbishop Stepinac to Pavelić. There has not been, though, a contextualisation of the events. Some of them can be useful to better understand how things have been altered:

1) When the Independent State of Croatia was established, Mgr. Stepinac interacted with Pavelić in the occasion of an institutional event concerning the Country. A photographer captured the moment but did not say a word about the context. Nobody, at the time, highlighted that after being created Archbishop, Stepinac had already been to Belgrade (July 2, 1934) to pay homage to the king (and to
take the oath of allegiance).

2) A photographer took a picture of Mgr. Stepinac (February 23, 1942) during the inauguration of the Parliament (which was later obliterated by Pavelić). There was no mention, however, to the fact that the Archbishop was not sitting in the hall with the members of the Parliament, but in the rear, in the visitors section.

3) As for humanitarian aid, the Archbishop supported the creation of a children’s shelter in Tuškanac (Zagreb). He wanted to take part to the grand opening, in order to bless the building. Pavelić was there too, with his wife, wearing his uniform. A photographer of the Regime captured Pavelić and Stepinac together, and there was no mention to the fact that the Archbishop was there to fulfil a pastoral assignment that had been planned far in advance. On the contrary, one preferred to underline the “special connection” between the Archbishop and the poglavnik.

4) Some books and websites still show and use a picture coming from the archives of Ustaša propaganda. This is the caption describing
the picture: “Abbot Marcone and Pavelić on a countryside trip.” In Mgr. Marcone’s diaries, where he used to write down his movements, there is no mention to that “trip.” The Apostolic Visitor met the Croatian commander only to discuss new actions in favour of the population23.

*Manipulation and consensus*

Several books dealing with Balkan, and particularly Croatian history, tend to hide the fact that Pavelić did not enjoy the “general consensus” that is often attributed to him (using Ustaša propaganda material and Yugoslav sources.)

[...]

*Misleading information on Franciscans*

Some claim that the concentration camp in Jasenovac was run by Franciscans. On the contrary, the captains running the camp were Ustaše.

[...]

23 Cf. G. Mongelli, op. cit., p. 225, footnote 182
Silence about the Positio documents

It is important to underline that many texts dealing with Archbishop Stepinac do not take into account the hundreds of documents collected in the six volumes of the Positio super martyrio (Beatificationis et canonizationis Servi Dei (Aloysii Stepinac.)

[...]

Misleading information about the 1946 trial

There is another peculiarity. Some authors do not take into account the fact that during the trial in Zagreb (1946) all the charges concerning Mgr. Stepinac were circumscribed to the political sphere.

[...]

Omission of praises to Mgr. Stepinac

A further aspect needs to be discussed. Over the years, the manifold praises to the humanitarian aids supported directly or indirectly by Mgr. Stepinac have been kept secret.

[...]
Silence about British Intelligence

In different texts about Mgr. Stepinac there is no sign of intelligence activities.

[...] 

No mention to agent Stanislav Rapotec’s report

A further report was written at the beginning of August 1942 by Stanislav Ivan Rapotec (1913-1997.) He was born in Trieste, when the city belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

[...]  

Misinformation about the relationship between Pius XII and the Independent State of Croatia

Mgr. Stepinac was not the only victim of the misinformation processes. Pope Pius XII himself was involved in it.

[...]
**Historical research today**

In the context described above, it is important to highlight that, despite various difficulties, a remarkable amount of information on Mgr. Stepinac has been recovered.

1) As for Stepinac’s intervention in favour of Serbian citizens, the statements made by the witnesses summoned by the Archbishop’s lawyers during the trial wanted by the Communist Regime in 1946 are still available.

Besides, there are records presented during the hearings (about 180 pages). The documents are now in the archive of Yugoslav secret police.

In 1946, the judges did not take into account the information provided by Stepinac’s lawyers, and refused to hear a few university professors (they were all Serbians), the Orthodox bishop of Pakrac Emilijan Marinović (1902-1982), a few Orthodox priests and an Orthodox head physician who worked at the university hospital and who had already been sentenced to death for looking after
some partisans who Mgr. Stepinac had hidden.

2) Zagreb Archdiocese register contains the names of hundreds of people who were saved by the Archbishop over four years.

[...]

3) Many documents have been found in the archive of the Yugoslav secret police. They show that Stepinac saved many people of different nationalities from concentration camps24.

4) In a letter sent to the Holy See on October 1, 1945, Luigi Petrucci, an Italian minister in Zagreb25, wrote as follows: “It was thanks to the intervention of Catholic clergy, and in particular of Mgr. Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, that Jewish persecution and Orthodox massacres stopped”26.


25 Minister Petrucci arrived in Zagreb on July 14, 1943. Shortly after Mussolini was captured, the SS interned him with the Italian delegation personnel. His career as an ambassador ended on November 5, 1952.

An intricate situation

What has been said so far describes an intricate situation:

1) Misleading information which put Archbishop Stepinac in a bad (sometimes terrible) light continues to be published, with no reference to the sources or the date of the documents\textsuperscript{27}.

2) Historians’ research work is often hindered. In the post-communist Europe, there is an ongoing debate on the access to the archives and on its regulation.

In Belgrade, where Yugoslav institutions had their headquarters, it is still complicated to browse files concerning public security. This pushed scholars to fill the information gaps with other sources, for instance oral testimonies, which, however, cannot answer all the still-hanging questions\textsuperscript{28}.


3) Historical research, if set in a multidirectional way, could provide significant information about the Archbishop, collected by different military apparatuses, intelligence organisations\textsuperscript{29}, political offices and informers (reports). \textsuperscript{30}

4) Thanks to the commitment of some scholars, we know that the reports written by officials of the Axis, of Pavelić’s government and of the Partisan Movement were not in favour of the Archbishop. This shows that there was no affinity, ideological closeness, shared plans or cooperation\textsuperscript{31}.

5) For this reason, as far as historic truth is concerned, it would be useful if some scholar – who aims at examining in depth Mgr. Stepinac’s


life and actions – tried to take into account every aspect of the available documents. In this way, one could prevent the spread of misleading and biased information, which is also not reliable\(^\text{32}\).

DID JESUS OF NAZARETH EXIST?

Research, non-Christian sources, comparisons. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

A prophet? A pacifist? A protester? A marginal Jew? Who was Jesus of Nazareth for his contemporaries? Above all, what did the non-Christians think about him? In order to answer these questions, one needs to take into account the historical sources and to analyse the books of the first Centuries. Moreover, it is useful to be familiar with archaeology. Such a background helps to better understand some contents of the Old Testament. With this book, Professor Pier Luigi Guiducci aims to provide the tools to find answers that are not linked to personal opinions but to real facts.

IN TIME OF TRIAL

Christian Martyrs’ Testimonies in Rome between the 1st and the 4th Century. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

Christ’s followers, who faced martyrdom during the first centuries of Christianity, differed for age, social status, geographical area and education. They were not extraordinary people. They were not indifferent to pain and tragedies. Nevertheless, they did not repudiate their Faith. Among them, many kept proclaiming their being Christian until death. The purpose of this book is to commemorate and to thank them gratefully. They taught us one thing, which is always topical: the true Faith does not lead to earthly triumphs, and it does not always walk comfortable and easy roads. It means, indeed, to follow the footprints of the only Master, even when the road leads to the Golgotha of our time.

WITNESSES?

Peter and Paul in Rome. Historical Evidence. Teachings. Tragedies. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

Peter and Paul’s presence in Rome has a particular meaning. At the beginning of Christianity, they were witnesses, missionaries, masters, models of spiritual life and martyrs. They fulfilled the task they had been given by Jesus: to spread the Gospel among all nations. For that reason, they tried to spread it up to the centre of the Roman Empire, Rome. For their loyalty to Christ, for their firmness in difficult times and for their humanity, which they showed in many occasions, they remain two important and modern figures.

YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU…

The Holy Family of Nazareth. Three callings, three yeses to God. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

Is it impossible to analyse their family? Were they too extraordinary to be understood? Are they too far from modern reality to teach anything to our society, or were they, on the contrary, pious people who patiently dedicated their lives to a long-term project, living happy hours, as well as harsh times? This book, based on historical analysis and supported by archaeological contributions, follows different research paths and highlights new and unexpected dynamics.

FOR THE FAITH, FOR THE BROTHERS

Meaningful Elements of Roman Church History between the 1st and the 4th Century. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

This book provides useful and updated information about Roman Church history between the first and the fourth Century. The author of the book is a publishing expert and an historian. He outlines the coordinates of a reality that is not always easy to understand after so many centuries. From the origin of the missionary movement to the main features of the Roman Church, from the sacraments to the Empire-Church relationship, from the apologias to the cemeteries and the Peace of Constantine, the book describes both historic and everyday events, highlighting the role of faith and ecclesiastical life.

DOSSIER STEPINAC

Alojzije Stepinac (1898-1960)

An Archbishop among Ustaše, Chetniks, Fascists and Communists. (Preface by Peter Gumpel)

Disagreeable to Ante Pavelić's Ustaše, Nazis, Fascists, Chetniks and Tito's Communists, the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Viktor Stepinac (1898-1960) was neither a refined politician, nor a clever fixer. He did not use the tactics of a party strategist and he was not a hot-tempered, biased man. He worked to protect the Church from the events that devastated Croatia. Today, new documents highlight his fight against racism, his denouncement against crime, the safeguard of the oppressed, the humanitarian aid. He was sentenced to prison and house arrest for opposing the state attempt to subject Croatian Church to Tito’s Communism. He was created Cardinal, but he decided to remain in the place he had been shut in. He died before he could face a second trial.