

**Vladislav Bevc**, ed. *Smiling Slovenia: Political Dissent Papers*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. 344 pp. \$82.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-1-4331-0344-5.

*Smiling Slovenia* is a loose but informative collection of approximately sixty articles of varying length by various authors (including ten by Vladislav Bevc) addressing the less attractive aspects of Slovenia's political history. They address various violations of human rights both past and present, and are grouped into twelve (unnumbered) sections summarized below.

Section 1 (Dissent, 5–36) begins with a joint statement by Slovenian public figures lamenting the fact that, several years after Slovenia achieved independence, those in positions of power continued to reflect a communist mindset and that injustices from the past had not been redressed. The remaining material is follow-up commentary on the same statement. The articles in section 2 (History, 37–88) open with a review of the 1998 National Museum of Contemporary History exhibit *Dark Side of the Moon*, which discusses the postwar killings of non-communist combatants in Slovenia and postwar political prisoners, censorship, and other issues. This is followed by the topics of mass graves, post-communist political entrenchment, gymnast Leon Štukelj's mistreatment by the communists, and more mass graves.

Section 3 (Emigrés, 89–99) is relatively brief, examining Slovenia's attitude toward those returning from abroad—Andrej Bajuk in particular. Section 4 (Communists, 101–24) starts with an article on NATO-Russia rapprochement, followed by solid criticism of post-communist economics and politics by Ljubo Sirc and several short articles on the perpetuation of communist orientations. Section 5 (American Views, 125–32) opens with commentary on remarks by a “writer . . . who must remain anonymous in this book” (but is nonetheless named six pages later in another article) regarding Slovenia's reaction to the September 11th attack in New York. This is followed by two essays by an American apparently living in Slovenia (but writing in curiously non-native English) touching on Milan Kučan, Andrej Bajuk, September 11th, and NATO.

Section 6 (Nomenclatura Thrives, 133–70) contains two articles criticizing the conferral of an honorary doctorate on Milan Kučan by Cleveland State University, and an engaging and well-researched article by Ljubo Sirc on the communist politician Mitja Ribičič. Conspiracy theory is the focus of section 7 (Foreign Intrigue, 171–206), covering connections with Osama bin Laden, Chechens, secret meetings, the Lockerbie bombing, suppression of political opposition, and NATO lobbying.

The three articles in section 8 (Human Rights, 207–18) raise issues covered in other sections: property restitution and postwar killings. Section

9 (Property Restitution, 219–68) therefore largely continues this theme by addressing the stalling and obstruction that has accompanied the process. Similarly, section 10 (The Judiciary, 269–306) continues with criticism of judicial delays in returning confiscated (i.e., nationalized) property and accusations of corruption in the judiciary, as well as an interview with former Public Prosecutor General Anton Drobnič on the rehabilitation of Bishop Gregorij Rožman.

By the time the reader reaches section 11 (Economy, 307–24), the opening content is predictable: property restitution, followed by discussion of entrepreneurship. The very brief section 12 (Media Bliss, 325–30) wraps up the book, discussing writer Drago Jančar as a voice of dissent, government control of the media, and entrenchment of the left in the government.

The quality and style of the articles in this volume varies greatly. Some are carefully written by well-known contributors such as Niko Grafenauer, Jože Pučnik, and Ljubo Sirc, whereas others appear to have been written in haste. Some are scholarly articles, and others have the character of informal letters to the editor. The result is rather bumpy reading. Some of the articles appear to be included solely to serve as a mouthpiece for the editor's views: for example, the article "An Argentine Slovene Seeks Roots" (98–99), originally published in *The Economist* (20 May 2000), is littered with sarcastic bracketed comments in broken English. Heartfelt though they may be, the effect is more one of scrawled graffiti than annotation.

*Smiling Slovenia* also suffers from lack of attribution of authorship for a number of the contributions (including two essays written for Radio Free Europe by this reviewer). This seriously undermines its scholarly integrity. Otherwise, the authors of articles are noted only where the articles appear in the volume, not in the table of contents, making it impossible to scan by authors' names.

The book is also illustrated by five photos. Three of them (100, 124, 132) feature the book's editor, sometimes posing with prominent personalities, one (324) may feature the editor (but is not sufficiently clear), and the last (333) is a picture of the Jefferson Memorial, where the editor takes inspiration. A better use of the space would have been to portray some of the topics, in maps or photos, that the articles address, especially postwar crimes and their perpetrators.

Finally, the typesetting of the volume is extremely careless, with misplaced footnote numbers (e.g., *articl<sup>57</sup>e*, 97), misspellings (e.g., *enrlolled*, 2; *ben*, 35; *Jan car*, 37; *al*, 75, 296; *a priory*, 88; *Lberation*, *Liberatin*, 118; *entreprenneur*, 119; *Tbe*, 122; *L:avžitar*, 195; *promisof*, 203;

*rrule*, 205; *Slovenia=s*, 315; *Georg Bush*, 336—to list only a few that leapt out), and missing punctuation and quotation marks set backwards (206).

Bevc is correct in his sentiment that many of the unsavory aspects of Slovenian history have been whitewashed or swept under the carpet. This is especially true with regard to the recurrent themes of postwar killings, mass graves, and the snail-like pace of restitution procedures for confiscated property. Unfortunately, this poorly organized volume of cynical and often catty commentary will do little to raise consciousness of or redress these very serious issues.

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