

# CATHOLICS AS MARTYRS?

A good book review is not necessarily a favorable one—it is one that accurately informs the reader of the author's thesis and then analyzes how successful he was in sustaining his argument. At least this is true for non-fiction works. Similarly, a bad review is one that misrepresents what the author said and then criticizes him for his "failing."

This is what happened to Robert Royal in the pages of the *Washington Post Book World* when Lauren F. Winner recently reviewed his new work, *Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century: A Comprehensive World History*. Royal was on target when he labeled the review an "angry diatribe."

Fairness dictates that our members should know that Bob Royal is a member of the Catholic League's board of advisors; he is currently president of the distinguished Faith and Reason Institute in Washington. But fairness also dictates that the *Washington Post* should never have published Winner's ideologically driven review.

Royal demonstrates that millions of Catholics were martyred in the twentieth century and that most of them died under totalitarian regimes. Because the lion's share met their fate under Communism, Winner decides to shoot the messenger (Royal) because she can't bear his message (that putting leftist theory into practice has had murderous consequences). So she resorts to *ad hominem* attacks (e.g., "one doesn't read a book by the director of Faith and Reason Institute expecting political evenhandedness").

Not surprisingly, Winner trots out the old canard about the alleged "silence" of the Church during the Holocaust. That most of those who died under Hitler were Catholic—even if they were not all singled out like Jews—is something she'd rather not discuss. They were just "in the wrong place at the wrong

time.”

If you’d like to register a complaint, do it with Marie Arana, Editor, *Washington Post Book World*, 1150 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20071. You might ask her to explain what her take is on Winner’s opening salvo against Royal: “It may look as if Christians have been running the show for the last 100 years, but for every Christian in power there was, somewhere, a Christian getting killed for his faith.”

That kind of snide remark suggests that Winner has made up her mind: the real power brokers of the past century—the ones responsible for all the bloodshed—are followers of Christ. So how could it be that so many have been martyred?

As the former mayor of New York, Ed Koch, once said, it is libelous to say Christians killed Jews during the Holocaust. Nazis did it. It would be instructive to see whether Arana (forget Winner) agrees with this assessment.

Meanwhile, Royal’s book is available for \$39.95 from Crossroad. Ask your local bookstore to secure a copy for you. You’ll more than likely agree with the American Library Association’s review of Royal’s book as published in *Booklist*: “An eloquent, painstakingly researched tribute to those ordinary human beings who managed to meet oppression and death with extraordinary dignity, grace, and faith.”