

AFTERWORD

I was lucky enough to meet Ferdinando Pascolo on 24 October 2009 in Gemona del Friuli, my adoptive city.

On that occasion a message from the Chief of Defence General Staff was read. General C.A. Vincenzo Camporini recalled that Ferdinando “deserves the grateful and affectionate respect of all Italians” for his actions and humanity on the Russian front and later in the struggle for liberation.

We are lucky that in his final years Ferdinando did eventually leave us a memorial. This is a completely different testimony compared to many others of this kind: the war and personal events he describes are a lesson in his philosophy of life and talk about the relationships between human beings, be they enemies or friends. It is a sort of secular gospel.

Moreover, as Claudio Magris wrote “it is really [...] beautiful, full of freshness and truth, of – I think unconscious – epic force. It is a piece of a mosaic, or rather of what could and should be the mosaic of a different Italy”.

It is always said that in order to plan a future of peace and tolerance among peoples it is necessary to be able to read the stories of individuals within our History. In this regard, a parallel can be drawn between this book, which tells stories of experiences before and after 1942, and *Apology of History* by Marc Bloch, written in 1942. *An Unusual Young Man* is a book and a manual that walks us through history and provides us with what historians call ‘the spirit of the times’. Thanks to this volume, it is easier to analyse and understand the events that took place in Italy and had an impact on the whole of the Twentieth Century.

After the somewhat unexpected death of Ferdinando, his ethical teaching was translated into the educational project *Humanity within the war*. The project was linked to the Military Memorial in Redipuglia, where the church of Regina Pacis was recently consecrated. The words inscribed under the statue of Regina Pacis are an extract from Ferdinando’s memoirs.

I was the first Rector of an Italian University to institute a group to promote the relationship between universities and state bodies, including the armed forces and the police. The ongoing relationship between these institutions, based on a holistic approach, allows us to better interpret the complexities of the current fragmentary geopolitical scenario and helps us to tackle it.

With the printing of this edition in English, published by Forum Editrice Universitaria Udinese (as well as the Russian translation by another publisher), the story of Ferdinando’s humanity can reach every corner of the world. At the same time, it provides additional material to historians which may prove useful in their important profession.

Alberto Felice De Toni

Rector, Università degli Studi di Udine