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# Don Jose Maria Arizmendiarrieta

(22 April 1915 - 29 November 1976)

*Don José María* was born in Markina (Biscay) in the hamlet of Iturbe, in the neighborhood of Barinaga.

His parents were José Luis and Tomasa, owners of a good farmhouse with its own hired hand.

His father was known as man of peace among their neighbors: good-natured, with a social life centered on fairs and brotherhoods; cheerful and decisive.

His mother, a housewife on the model of a Biblical woman, was the true teacher of *don José María*: intelligent, orderly, industrious, and self-sacrificing, she carried the weight and style in education of their children and the administration of the hamlet.

*Don José María*, the first of three brothers and one sister (José María, Francisco, María and Jesús), at twelve years old, renounced the title and privileges of the firstborn in the interest of his religious vocation, which led him to the Seminary of *latines* in Castillo de Elejabeitia.

His teacher, *doña* Patrocinio Uranga, head of the rural school, prepared him thoroughly for this step.

In 1931, in the midst of republican ferment, we find him in the famous Seminario Mayor de Vitoria to study Philosophy and Theology.

## **From the seminary to the barracks**

The Spanish Civil War surprised him in Markina in the middle of a vacation. At military age, he joined the Basque militia, and was assigned journalist duty.

He was stationed at the General Barracks of Abando. He participated in the founding and operation of two newspapers: *Gudari* and *Eguna*.

From this observation point, with first-hand documentation, he followed all the vicissitudes of the Euskadi Government and the bloody events that devastated the Basque Country.

The 19th of June, 1937, he was taken prisoner in Bilbao. Following a brief attempt to escape to France (he made it as far as Lazcano), he was hunted down in Bilbao after being betrayed by a compatriot. His fellow journalist was condemned to death; he was given a reprieve, but forced to join the “national” troops, because he was of military age and declared he had been stationed at the barracks, not the newspaper.

He spent the remainder of the war in Burgos alternating between military tasks and seminary studies. When the war ended, he returned to Vitoria Seminary to complete his priestly studies.

## To Mondragon, out of obedience

The first of January, 1941, he said his first mass in Markina.

He had already packed his suitcase and documents to pursue his studies at the University of Louvaine [*Belgium*] when he received a letter from Bishop Lauzurica sending him to the Parish of St. John the Baptist of Mondragon as curate. All his hopes were cut short, and he had to settle for eventually taking short courses in Vitoria and Santander to get his degree.

February fifth, that same year, he got off at the Mondragon train station with a cardboard suitcase, a briefcase, and all the regulation attire of a cleric: cloak, cassock, capello romano, etc.

One day later, *don* José Luis Iñarra would arrive, and would rule the Parish of Mondragon with a masterful touch for 35 years († 2 October, 1976).

The '40s were the years of hunger and of all the aftermath of a cruel civil war: orphans on the street, widows without support, irreconcilable enemies, workers in forced unemployment, misery of all kinds...

In this environment, *don* José María took up his pastoral duties. Soon, he made contact with the young people in the Apprentice School of the Unión Cerrajera, in Catholic Action, in the J.O.C., and in the Congregation of San Luis Gonzaga.

## Milestones

Chronologically, we can mark the milestones of his life as follows:

- 1941** He arrives in Mondragón on the 5th of February.
- 1943** The first of June, Youth Sports of Mondragón is created and presented. The 10th of October, the Professional School is officially inaugurated in the building of the Fundación Viteri. The enrollment registers 20 students. Lands in Iturripe (16,000 m<sup>2</sup>), are purchased with money (and awareness) raised among the people with cavalcades, festivals, raffles, etc.
- 1947** The first class of Industrial Experts enrolls in the School of Zaragoza, with a schooling dispensation.
- 1948** The Mondragón League of Education and Culture is created as a legal entity and sponsor of the Professional School and other teaching activities.
- The '50s** Don José María makes himself heard in the people. His sermons and conferences are not easy to digest. He always has the habit of “thinking out loud.” He speaks with a certain ponderousness, as if he is meditating on each expression. Many times, people do not understand where he was going. He is not discouraged. He takes for himself the saying that “he who has to say something, sooner or later says it, and sooner or later they hear him.”
- His two great works, the Polytechnical Professional School and the industrial cooperatives, are established in this decade.

**1952** With attendance of the Minister of Education, Mr. Ruiz Giménez, the new Professional School is opened in the enormous “Cometal” building close to the station. The 170 students get lost in the cement and iron structure with capacity for 1,000. Is *don* José María crazy? He receives, from the hands of the Minister, the Commendation of the Civil Order of Alfonso X, the Wise.

The League of Education and Culture is granted the Sash of the Civil Order of Alfonso X, the Wise.

Twelve students of the first class finish the degree of Industrial Expert.

**1953** The Mondragon Association of the Home is created.

**1955** The social work of *don* José María displeases administrative spheres. His actions in Mondragon are considered revolutionary. There are some formal accusations. *Don* José María is nearly exiled. He is saved by a people’s counteroffensive.

**1956** The day 14 of April is a very memorable date in the annals of cooperativism. In a ceremony, *don* José María blesses the first stone of ULGOR, S.C.I., on the land of San Andrés de Mondragón.

**1957** The Professional School is officially recognized as a regulation teaching center with the degrees of Official and Master.

**1959** The Caja Laboral Popular and the Servicios de Provisión Social (the future LAGUN-ARO) are founded on Resusta street in Mondragon.

**1960** In September, the first (mimeographed) edition of the magazine *Cooperación* (later *T.U.*) comes out, on the exclusive initiative of *don José María*.

**The '60s** It is a fruitful decade, marking, so to speak, the establishment of cooperativist doctrine around the *Caja Laboral Popular*. A dizzying expansion of the industrial cooperatives takes place, and other initiatives take shape.

*Don José María* sees one of his dreams carried out: the construction of the new Polytechnical Professional School on the broad lands of Iturripe. It is 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> for a school/sports complex. The work is carried out thanks, in large part, to popular subscription.

The School had been and would be the engine of cooperative expansion.

**1964** The League of Education and Culture is transformed into a cooperative.

**1965** Another new institution is created: The League of Assistance and Education, title-holder of the Assistance Center.

Construction begins on the new Polytechnical Professional School in Iturripe, and on the sports complex. The School has more than 1,000 students, and teaches the specialties of Mechanics, Electricity, Electronics, Smelting, Drafting and Automation.

**1966** A new, unique cooperative is formed: ALECOOP (*Actividad Laboral Escolar Cooperativa*), an enterprise managed by the active students of the Profession Polytechnical School.

By Decree of the 3rd of June, 1965, the Medalla de Oro al Labor is granted to *don José María*. The Minister of Labor, Romero Gorria, personally presents the medal the 25th of August, 1966.

The 24th of April of this same year, Mondragon pays due homage to three deserving figures, naming them adoptive children of the villa: *don Mariano Briones* (doctor), *don José Luis Iñarra* (parson) and *don José María Arizmendiarieta*. The three have completed 25 years of work in Mondragon.

**1968** The Polytechnical Professional School is recognized as a school of Technical Industrial Engineering, by Ministerial Order of the 30th of July. This closes the cycle of recognitions. Still to come are its transformation into a University School of Technical Engineering (March 5, 1976) and the recognition of the School as a Polytechnical Institute (July 2, 1976).

## **Illness and death**

In the spring of 1968, *don José María* receives the first serious warning about his health: a threat of angina [*angina pectoris*, also known as *stable angina*]. Following a delicate surgery, he is subjected to ongoing medical treatment and periodic check-ups.

An anecdote: by doctor's prescription, some "friends" steal his democratic bicycle, replacing it with a Velosólex [*moped*] for relief from his physical efforts.

His figure has become well-known on the streets of Mondragon: tall, lean, slow of gait, sunken temples, dark glasses, white hair.

In spite of the care, the disease is slowly undermining him. Fatigue overcomes him, and he cannot disguise it.

Once again, he has to go into “drydock.” At the clinic of La Concepción in Madrid, he undergoes open-heart surgery. It is the month of February, 1974. He gradually recovers from the heart disease, but not so from the incisions from the operation, the scarring from which produce grave and continuous complications.

The treatments and cures are like a form of martyrdom for him. To questions of how he felt with the wound weighing on him, he says: “It is an unimportant discomfort, borne like sackcloth...”

Despite it all, he leads a nearly normal life, though every day, he looks more worn. His physical presence wanes visibly. He lives by the spirit, in the hope of being useful to the institutions in which he participates.

The most important final dates are the following:

**1968** First serious warning of his cardiac condition. Operation.

**1974** Open-heart surgery and application of an artificial valve (February).

**1976** June: Another surgery to address what they call “OR illness,” which impedes the normal closure of the wounds from an operation.

September: Another operation in the clinic of La Concepción in Madrid, with a skin transplant for the scarring of the wound. He recovers well.

October: Liver and renal complications appear, along with general weakening. He appears physically consumed, but with the same optimistic and creative spirit as always.

November: Early in the month, he is admitted to the Assistance Center of Mondragon for intensive care and rest. New complications appear.

The 25th, in full lucidity and conscious of his state, he receives the last sacraments.

He suffers pooling in the lungs that is alleviated by means of punctures.

The morning of the 28th, Sunday, he is in agony. At noon, he receives the visit of the Minister of Labor, *don* Alvaro Rengifo, a personal friend. He recovers lucidity and summons the strength to converse with the Minister about the Cooperation Law. "To look back is an offense to God: we must always look forward," is his last message.

He still has the strength to encourage relatives and friends, aware of his impending final separation from them.

On Monday, the 29th, in the afternoon, he declines visibly: his physical reserves have reached their limit.

At 8:20 he is overcome by a heart attack, which is definitive; he exhales a deep sigh and dies in holy peace.

## Funeral honors

There is a viewing of the body in the parish church. For two days, a vigil is held for him by various representatives of the cooperatives in the area, family, and friends. The parade of people is endless. A little of his popular recognition is reflected in the alms trays at masses: some 300,000 pesetas are collected.

The first of December, at 7 in the evening, the Minister of Labor presides over the funeral proceedings and accompanies the mortal remains of his friend, finally throwing dirt on the casket in the cemetery.

More than 60 priests officiate the religious ceremonies.

The temple cannot hold the thousands of people who want to pay him a final tribute, and they crowd into the porticos and adjacent streets.

On the shoulders of the priests, the nephews of the deceased, and teachers from the Polytechnical Professional School, the casket is carried from the parish church to the cemetery. Along the entire length of the route, people crowd in to give him a heartfelt final farewell.

Now *don* José María rests in peace. Never was the expression better used for one who worked so much in life!

Juan Leibar

Geuk, geuretik eta geurez,

jaso beharko dugu

Euskal Herri maitea.

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# Prologue to the Second Edition

## Citations

The sources and citation system in this study are as follows.

This study is based fundamentally on the publication *The Complete Works of José María Arizmendiarrieta*, carried out by the Caja Laboral Popular, Mondragon, undated, restricted edition, mimeographed.

Notice: bibliographical indications of cited texts of Arizmendiarrieta's will always be given within the text itself of the study, with the abbreviations indicated below. All other bibliographical citations will go at the foot of the page.

*The Complete Works of Arizmendiarrieta* is comprised of 15 volumes (one printed and fourteen in mimeograph). The writings are prepared in a thematic classification made up of seven principle parts, whose abbreviations we give here:

CAS (only printed volume): Social Apostolate Conferences CLP (I, II, III): Caja Laboral Popular EP (I, II): Professional School FC (I, II, III, IV): Cooperative Training PR (I, II): First Achievements SS (I, II): Sermons

So, the citation system is interpreted as follows:

EP, I, 240 = “See the group of volumes of Professional School, first volume, page 240.”

SS, I, 128 = “See the group of volumes of Sermons, first volume, page 128.”

FC, III, 15 = “See the group of volumes of Cooperative Training, third volume, page 15.”

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To speak again about Arizmendiarieta, *don* José María, in a new climate, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, where an old world is closing and we don't know, much as we would like to, if another new one is really opening. It appears a task is already emerging: defining the new significance of cooperativism in this time. Nearly all the most recent texts about Arizmendiarieta or the experience of Arrasate-Mondragon start by making reference to the decisive changes after his death, in the Spanish State and in the international order, to highlight the renewed interest in the “Arizmendi model” of community and of association of work in this global context of readjustments and adaptations.

This new edition that Otalora has scheduled of *The Cooperative Man* can omit this noisy change in context. It wasn't an easy exercise in its day, in a radicalized climate of ideological, political, and social contradictions, in a polemic, tense environment, full of rude condemnations, to find a language and a reserved enough

way to deal with the topic, without getting into vain excesses, and not avoiding poisonous issues, to reach the core:

Arizmendiarieta's thinking, as it exposes itself through his work, with the strength, and at the same time, the fragility that characterize it. The only thing that may be surprising today is that it could have constituted a problem then. It also was to us. In a short time, the winds have changed greatly, above all those that only five years ago seemed powerful and were mercilessly severe with Arizmendiarieta's reformist cooperative project. Since then, "the gods have left one by one, almost on tiptoes, almost without us realizing," José Luis Rubio has exquisitely diagnosed.<sup>1</sup>

The situation is certainly quite different now. Workers now have unions, legislation, etc. They are not at all helpless. It is even democratic—they do not go about clandestinely. And yet their jobs are in more danger than ever—unemployment is increasing, and the future looms threateningly. The concepts of initiative, responsibility, maturity, and cooperation take on an urgency close to that of a life preserver.

Yet, at the same time, the rigors of the crisis, which bring workers-cooperators hard responsibilities and sacrifices, make this commitment unattractive, and all the more so in a society that, in professional and work fields, is not easily impressed by spiritual motivations.

"The time of great ideals, of collective stakes, is already history,"

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<sup>1</sup> Rubio, J.L., *Don José María Arizmendiarieta: Una presencia estimulante*, Fundación Gizabidea, Mondragon 1990, 23.

observes José Luis Rubio. “The great ideologies have fallen, incapable of giving a global response to the problems that have arisen. With the Berlin Wall, one of the last great collective dreams also has fallen (...). We are in post-modernism: short, private projects; immediate, quick triumph; suspicion of every common project; transcendence is success, position, power.”

New times, new risks. There is the risk, for example, of ending up forgetting the spirit that enlivened the cooperative project, before the bombardment of needs, to become strong in strategies of pure efficacy. It continues to be valid that cooperativism is not—should not be—a factory that works better or worse, or a vigorous Caja Laboral. Arizmendian cooperativism is first and foremost a thought, a human and social attitude, a recognition of principles and ideals.

All this considered, there is no reason to give up. The decline of ideologies doesn't necessarily mean the decline of ideas and ideals. What the parents were able to do, the children will not be unable to do. Risk is inherent to life. There exist no prefabricated solutions with a guarantee of success that could be applied mechanically to new situations. In Arizmendiarieta's words, the task will always be: To be able to work with realism without renouncing ideals. That is: new times, also new possibilities.

In effect, the collapse of the countries of Eastern Europe has not only demonstrated the need for a search for new formulas for the organization of work, but has also made it real possibility, free from dogmatism. “For many years, the field of economic organization and management has been closed up in the intellectual prison of the dual orientation: the choice between

ownership and control of the means of production by the private sector or by the State.”<sup>2</sup>

Following the “decline of totalitarian ideologies,” now “an ever-greater number of people from all over the world experience heterodox forms of organization and control of economic activities.”<sup>3</sup>

In this way, Arrasate appears, not as a model to copy, but as an experience rich in teachings.<sup>4</sup> [*Translator’s note: “Arrasate” is the Basque name for the town of Mondragon.*]

R. Morrison, a researcher who came to the topic of Arrasate-Mondragon through the anti-nuclear movement, speaks in an especially positive tone regarding the teachings that can be extracted from this experience. He writes that now that the Left and Right are equally out of ideas and don’t know where to turn, “Mondragon suggests that we can act creatively within our own communities to build social systems that embrace freedom, justice, and ecological sanity.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Whyte, W.F.-Whyte, K.K., *Mondragón, más que una utopía*, Txertoa, Donostia/Saint Sebastian 1989, 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 343. Mondragon can serve as an inspiration to those trust themselves to find channels to follow a humanist conception as they face a hard economic and technological reality. Mondragon demonstrates that is not easy to face that challenge, but that it can be done. The entire fifth part of this book carries the title of “The lessons of Mondragon.”

<sup>5</sup> Morrison, R., *We Build the Road As We Travel*, Philadelphia 1991, 2. “Mondragon

Morrison believes he has discovered, in Arrasate, the point from which it is possible for us to “reimagine the future”—an expression that he owes to Jesus Larrañaga.

Morrison finds the Arizmendian concept of society, of work, and of community full of teachings at three levels. To remodel our modern (or already postmodern) industrial society itself,<sup>6</sup> to outline new models of development for the Third World, and especially interesting for the countries of the East, or former communists, looking for a democratic socialist economic formula.<sup>7</sup>

*The Guardian* reported on an important study trip to Mondragon made precisely a year ago by thirteen prominent Soviet politicians and businesspeople, among them Dr. Valery Rutgaizer, a man whom Gorbachev—according to the newspaper—has

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and its development is part of, and a commentary on, the postmodern condition. It is essentially an experiment in social reconstruction through cooperative community.” Ib. 15.

<sup>6</sup> “The Mondragon model offers us the prospect of the organic creation of a truly independent civil society, a path away from the destructive allure of industrial modernism and toward a social order that respects and fosters the unity in diversity of the natural world.” Ib. 222. “The social choices developed by the Mondragon system are basic material for creating a new reality. The exercise of freedom and the building of community, the social creation of unity in diversity, are central to the true social re-forming of industrial modernism.” Ib. 245.

<sup>7</sup> “The Mondragon model has much to offer those exploring new directions as part of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.” And again, “The appeal of the Mondragon model to innovative thinkers in a Communist world in transition is understandable.” Ib. 229.

entrusted with the difficult economic transformation of the Soviet system.<sup>8</sup> According to this information, Arrasate offered the visitors numerous useful ideas for their plans, and they were able to learn even more from Mondragon than from their preceding visit to England.<sup>9</sup>

W. Foote and K. King Whyte point out that “Mondragon has already had an important influence on US legislation on worker cooperatives and worker participation in business ownership,”<sup>10</sup> highlighting the interest sparked by this experience in the unions and universities of that country. “It is obvious,” they conclude, “that the message of Mondragon is reaching an ever-wider public throughout the world.”<sup>11</sup>

At home, future perspectives seem to us less grandiose, more tempered and pragmatic. The dominant concern of cooperators at this moment seems to be the business homogenization of the Grupo Cooperativo and the development of a new strategy to face the new situation in the European framework, without shrinking from these rather delicate operations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Guardian*, December 1, 1989, Financial News, 6. “Viva Perestroika: Why Russia’s future may lie with the Basques.”

<sup>9</sup> The delegation found more ideas for practical application in Mondragon than in Britain....”

<sup>10</sup> Whyte, W.F.-Whyte, K.K., op. cit. 321.

<sup>11</sup> *Ib.*, 329.

<sup>12</sup> Ormaechea, J.M., *La Experiencia Cooperativa de Mondragón*, Grupo Cooperativo Mondragon 1991, 189ss “El futuro del Grupo.”

“The formulation of this new strategy,” writes José María Ormaechea, “burdened with apparent contradictions with the described principles and mission, finds its explanation in the new context in which it is judged necessary to access economies of optimal scales to make the cooperatives profitable, and better still, the sectors that emerge from groups of them. Finding a place in Europe, and above all, the drive to achieve a critical sufficient dimension in useful time, is going to require vigorous actions that will be impossible if they only promote individual cooperative businesses.”<sup>13</sup>

Ormaechea himself prefers not to get into predicting the adventure—“what the Grupo Cooperativo Mondragon will be in the future is going to depend necessarily on the attitude of the men [*and women*] who progressively take over from the first generations.”

On the other hand, for cooperativism to remain intact, in spite of its own difficulties, the original vocational commitment to contribute to the transformation of society, to “make a country human,” which, in a devastated Euskadi, should perhaps be read as “remake the country humanely” from its rubble. If the times are bad for poetry, neither are they good for work.

Arizmendiarieta intended to humanize mankind by humanizing work. Today, to be able to humanize work, it first has to be created, and that is not easy. In considerations from 1969, Arizmendiarieta recalls the long Basque history of emmigration

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<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*, 208-209.

and warned of the danger of its recurrence, if measures are not taken in time. “*Euskalerrian baño Euskalerritik kanpora asko be euskaldun geiago bizi garena gogoratzekoan, ezin aztuenezake lenago, orain eta geruago be gure tartetik iges egin bearrean asko izango dirala, ekonomi sailletan gure erriari indar aundiagoa emoten ez ba-dautsagu.*” It was not prophecy, but simple lucidity, and don José María’s ability to think of things over the long term. What can and should the cooperative spirit contribute to the creation of jobs today? As can be seen, interest in his reflections does not seem to fade with the passage of time.

The number of studies dedicated to Arizmendian cooperativism or to the experience of Arrasate-Mondragon shows that researchers’ interest has not faded over the years. Quite the contrary. Since the first edition of *The Cooperative Man*, published by Jakin/Caja Laboral Popular in 1984, new studies have proliferated in English, Japanese, German, Spanish, and Basque, both about the person of don José María<sup>14</sup> and about cooperativism of the Arizmendian type or, more concretely, the experience in Arrasate-Mondragon that he inspired.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Agirreazkuenaga, J., *Prentsa euskaraz: 1936eko gudaldian eta lehen Euskal Gobernuaren garaina*. Jakin 56 (1989) 97-113. Arejolaleibar, J., *Dn. Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta eta Basque*, unpublished (Arizmendiarieta Archive), 193 pp. Ormaechea, J.M., *El Hombre que yo conocí*, Fundación Gizabidea, Mondragon 1986. OYARZABAL, A., *Don José María Arizmendiarieta visto por sus discípulos*, Iikasbide 1989. Pérez de Calleja, A., *Arizmendiarieta el hombre de acción*, Foundation Gizabidea, Mondragon 1989.

<sup>15</sup> In Spanish, Asua Batarrita, B., *Educación y trabajo en la sociedad industrial del País Vasco: la Eskola Politeknikoa Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta en el Grupo Cooperativa*

While there is no lack of studies on pedagogy, anthropology, and even socio-linguistics and urban architecture, what continues to be most common is socio-economic analysis, and clearly, studies in English (from the US) predominate.

Among all this literature, a recent work deserves be highlighted: *Mondragon, More Than a Utopia*, by William Foote Whyte and Kathleen King Whyte, an investigation with clear objectives and carried out with precision.<sup>16</sup>

Its authors have been able to happily combine dense information with a readable and light narrative style. This book offers the most complete discussion so far of the cooperative experience in

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*tivo Mondragón*, thesis, Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea 1988. Chopeitia, C.A., *Una aproximación al cooperativismo mundial y Experiencia de Mondragón* (no year or institution given). In German, Heising, P., *Das Kooperativ-Experiment von Mondragon. Entstehung und Entwicklung des Kooperativ-Komplexes und die Formen der Partizipation in der Leitung*, University of Gottingen 1987. In English, Benham, L.-Keer, PH., *How Diverse Organizations Survive: A Case Study of the Mondragon Cooperatives*, Center for the Study of American Business, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri 1986. Gutiérrez Márquez, A., *The creation of Industrial Cooperatives in the Basque Country: A Case Study*, Division of the Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago 1985. Hansen, G.B.-Hidalgo, A., *The Mondragon Worker Cooperatives: An Example of Successful Community Economic Development*, Utah State University 1987. Heffner, R., *Mondragon: Study for an Industry Development Plan*, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA 1986. Milbrath, R.S., *Institutional Development and Capital Accumulation in a Complex of Basque Worker Cooperatives*, thesis, University of Michigan 1986.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. note 2. Originally published in 1988 by Cornell University of New York with the title *Making Mondragon, the Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Cooperative Complex*.

its diverse aspects: history, structures and organization of the businesses, the character and ideas of their inspiration, Arizmendiarieta, and the meaning of this experience for other essays. The work is the fruit of a long process of research described in the appendix by W. Foote Whyte<sup>17</sup> and constitutes, without a doubt, the finest text there is today about the experience of Arrasate-Mondragon, written with such love and intellectual rigor that even from a literary perspective, it is a delight.

For *The Cooperative Man*, which is now being republished, it is an honor have been of some help in more than a few of the investigations that have taken place after its publication, and to have been able to have a global discussion of Arizmendiarieta's thought for his purposes. It is no less of an honor to have deserved translation into Japanese by professor Hideo Ishizuka (1990).<sup>18</sup> And it gives us great satisfaction, not without surprise, to see the first run of five thousand copies sell out in seven years, which is proof of its validity and utility, beyond the small sphere of researchers, for workers, cooperators and people of all kinds interested in cooperative ideas.

Criticism of our work has been benign without exception, and even, in some cases, more than criticism. We take it as an invitation to pursue research in chapters that do not yet go deep

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<sup>17</sup> Ib., 345-356. "La evolución de nuestra investigación sobre Mondragón."

<sup>18</sup> Professor Hideo Ishizuka, who is familiar with modern European philosophy, is also the author of a book published in Japanese in 1991, whose title in translation would be *From the People of the Basque Cooperative: Mondragon*.

enough, especially in terms of the study of the personality (spirituality, etc.) of *don* José María.<sup>19</sup> We excuse ourselves by saying that in this study of Arizmendiarieta's thought, a mere analysis limited strictly to his writings, his biography could not interest us except as a framework for his ideas. We fully recognize the existence of these gaps in the research, and we can only vote for seeing this default corrected without delay. However, the methods will have to be different, and the authors will have to be others the day this work begins on these studies, starting with the systematic compilation of oral testimonies.<sup>20</sup>

For the moment, this second edition of *The Cooperative Man* maintains full the text of the first, only slightly revised. There are a few corrections—we appreciate the critiques—deletion of the organizational charts of the cooperative businesses inspired by Arizmendiarieta (they were already out of date anyway); translation into Spanish, in the notes, of a rather long text in Basque of criticism of cooperativism, an update of the bibliography, and some other minor retouching. The content remains intact: the Arizmendian philosophy of the person and of work.

“Work is, first and foremost, a service to community;”

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Gil Ortega, U., writes in *Lumen* (1985) 186. “We would have liked to have seen in the book (...) a more detailed study concerning the priestly and Christian experiences of *don* José María.” In the same vein, see Oyarzabal, A., *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> The conferences organized by the Fundación Gizabidea or those published by Otalora in recent years have come to fill this vacuum to a degree.

Arizmendiarrieta would have said at this point. Really, to be able to do work in this regard is the main objective of this book, including in its new edition, and at the same time, it serves as a tribute to the memory of *don* José María.

December 1991. In Berastegi.



# Introduction

José María Arizmendiarieta is considered the founder, or inspiration, of the cooperative movement of Mondragon.

The cooperative experience in Mondragon began in 1956.<sup>21</sup> “The great significance of the cooperative movement of Mondragon,” Professor D. Aranzadi, Rector of the Universidad de Deusto, recently wrote, “is its emphasis on industrial cooperativism.” Figuring into this experience are the largest industrial cooperatives in the world, with this industrial aspect being somewhat unusual and even unique at the global level.”<sup>22</sup>

According to the 1982 annual report of the Caja Laboral Popular, the movement then had 160 associated cooperatives,<sup>23</sup> in which 18,788 cooperative members worked. Of those, 88 are industrial

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<sup>21</sup> This was preceded by a year of provisional business experience in Gasteiz/Vitoria, so some mark the date as 1955. cf. Larrañaga, J., *Don José María Arizmendi-Arrieta y la experiencia cooperativa de Mondragón*. Caja Laboral Popular, Mondragón 1981, 125-127. Arizmendiarieta himself (CLP, III, 109) gives the year 1956 as the date of birth of the cooperative experience.

<sup>22</sup> Aranzadi, D., La cooperativa de producción industrial, in: *Primeras Jornadas de Cooperativas de Euskadi*, Eusko Jaurlaritza 1982, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Alava: 8, Guipuzcoa: 87, Navarra: 12, Biscay: 53.

production cooperatives.<sup>24</sup> The high number of teaching cooperatives is striking, with a total of 44 centers, with approximately 30,000 students.<sup>25</sup> This is due to linguistic needs, which have forced the Basque people to search for solutions through cooperative citizen initiative.<sup>26</sup> Keeping in mind that the two fields in which cooperativism has traditionally prospered are agricultural production and consumption, the originality of this Basque cooperativism is obvious.<sup>27</sup>

The movement now has its own Institute of Technological Investigation for the humanization of work (“Ikerlan”), a center for polytechnical studies (“J.M. Arizmendiarieta Eskola Politeknikoa”), its own insurance and social welfare service (“Lagun-Aro”) and, above all, its own financial organization, the Caja Laboral Popular/Lan Kide Aurrezkoa.

Every author highlights the importance of the creation of this

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<sup>24</sup> Alava: 5, Guipuzcoa: 54, Navarra: 7, Biscay: 22.

<sup>25</sup> Alava: 1, Guipuzcoa: 18, Navarra: 1, Biscay: 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Nuestra Experiencia Cooperativa*, Caja Laboral Popular, Mondragón 1979, 32-33. Most of the cooperative teaching centers associated with the Caja Laboral Popular are at the primary level, but it does have three centers at the university level: J.M. Arizmendiarieta Eskola Politeknikoa (EPP), in Mondragon, the Escuela Universitaria de Formación de Profesorado de E.G.B., in Escoriaza, and the Escuela de Técnicos Empresariales (ETEO), in Oñate, cf. Caja Laboral Popular, *The Mondragon Experiment*, s/f. (1983), 11-13.

<sup>27</sup> Total agricultural and food cooperatives: Alava: 1, Guipuzcoa: 2, Navarra: 1, Biscay: 3. Only one consumer cooperative: Eroski, with more than 120,000 members.

financial organization in the rapid and solid development of this movement. “The special weakness cooperative businesses suffer from in finance,” writes Professor Aranzadi, “is classic [...]. To confront this problem, the Caja Laboral Popular is an extremely interesting creation, because it has been able to collect resources through people saving, or from temporarily inactive funds from the Cooperatives [...]. Mondragon may, then, be a starting point for realistic, solid industrial cooperativism, and may be an important milestone, not only in the history of the cooperative movement, but also in the solution to the terrible dilemma of reconciling the demands of the industrial system with the humanization of business.”<sup>28</sup>

The interest that the Mondragon cooperative experience has sparked around the world in recent years is reflected in the bibliography that can be seen at the end of this study. It would be easy to bring together here an anthology of praise and expressions of acclaim, from R. Tamames, from the Commission of British parliamentarians, or from the Scandinavian, Chilean or Japanese press, or to highlight the interest shown in this experience from the Soviet Union to the countries of the Third World. But that is not our purpose. The objective of this study is not—we want to underscore, is not—the cooperative experience of Mondragon, to which the name of Arizmendiarieta is invariably associated. Our objective is, solely and exclusively, the thought of the person who, from the first moment, was its inspiration and guide, José María Arizmendiarieta.

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<sup>28</sup> Aranzadi, D., op. cit., 75.

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José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga was born in Markina, Biscay, on Iturbe estate in the neighborhood of Barinaga, at 1:00 in the afternoon, the twenty-second of April, 1915.<sup>29</sup> He died in Arrasate/Mondragón at 8:20 in the evening on the twenty-ninth of November, 1976. He was 61 years old. He was a priest.

Here, in brief, are the most important biographical data:<sup>30</sup> at twelve years old, in 1928, he entered seminary. He studied at the Seminaries of Castillo-Elexa-beitia (Humanities) and Gasteiz/Vitoria (Philosophy), until his studies were suspended by the civil war. He served as a journalist in the Basque Army. Taken prisoner after the fall of Bilbao (in the Larrinaga jail), and found guilty in the briefest of proceedings of military rebellion, he was later cleared of the charges<sup>31</sup> and transferred to the nationalist

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<sup>29</sup> Civil Registry, sixteenth notebook, section on births, folio seventy, Number 69: certified by Pedro Goyogana y Ugarte, Municipal Judge responsible party for the Markina Registry, issued the first of September, 1935, the date on which, for reasons unknown to us, it was inscribed well after the fact in the Civil Registry (Arizmendiarieta Archive). He descended, through the paternal line (Arizmendiarieta y Acha), from Eibar, through the maternal line (Madariaga y Careaga) from Markina y Muréлага. The spelling of the last name Arizmendiarieta varied from one document to another; he himself signed his name various ways.

<sup>30</sup> For his biography, see Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 13-36, and Leibar, J., "José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga. Apuntes para una biografía," *TU*, Nr. 190, Nov.-Dec. 1976, 58-63.

<sup>31</sup> The certificate that was issued for him on this occasion says, word for word,; "Audit of War of the ARMY OF OCCUPATION (sic!). Don Valeriano Peña González,

ranks in Burgos.<sup>32</sup> When the war ended, he returned to the Seminary of Gasteiz/Vitoria to be ordained a priest on the twenty-first of December, 1940. A month and a half later, he arrived at Mondragon, where he remained until his death.

The time of his activities at Mondragon has been divided into three periods: “[H]e would call the first phase ‘youth,’ from 1941 to 1956; the second, ‘work,’ from 1956 to 1973; the third, which is unfinished, ‘the classless society,’ since 1973.”<sup>33</sup> Arizmendiarieta first dedicated himself to training youth, to then give himself over fully to the cooperative movement that he himself had promoted with his teachings. In later years, he dreamed of interesting projects, especially concerning children and the elderly, looking towards a community that would bring about in its bosom the classless society. However, these three phases

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AUTHORIZED SECRETARY OF THE PERMANENT MILITARY TRIBUNAL NUMBER 1 OF THIS CITY. I CERTIFY: That in the urgent summary proceedings no. 289 of this year, pursued for military rebellion against José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga, sentence was delivered on the second of this month freely absolving said procesee with all manner of favorable pronouncements, having freed him on this date. And to deliver to the interested party effects of notification, I issue and sign this document in Bilbao the ninth of August, nineteen thirty seven. SECOND YEAR OF THE TRIUMPH. (Signatures and seals) (Arizmendiarieta Archive).

<sup>32</sup> A curriculum vitae written by Arizmendiarieta himself in September 1963 says: “(...) and joined the Light Artillery Regiment No. 11 of Burgos, where he was sent to Plana Mayor, to go to work in an Information Office in the General Captaincy of Burgos until his discharge on the 30th of July, 1939.” (Arizmendiarieta Archive).

<sup>33</sup> Ormaechea. J.M., Una solución a tiempo para cada problema, *TU*, Nr. 190, Nov.-Dec. 1976, 30.

reflect his concerns about concrete tasks to carry out, not the depths of his thought. It is clear, for example, that the concern for a classless society does not constitute only one stage, but a constant in his thought. In this sense, the last phase of his life, as Ormaechea has observed, means “something like the synthesis of everything that came before.”<sup>34</sup>

A rigorous story of Arizmendiarieta’s life and activities has yet to be written, a fact that, at times, makes it difficult to study his thought. Just as for Mounier,<sup>35</sup> whose disciple and follower he considered himself, events were Arizmendiarieta’s “interior teacher.” We see his reflections developing in intimate connection with the world of his surroundings, which he tried to transform, at the same time that he himself allowed himself to be transformed by it. That said, we again alert the reader that we will not stop to closely study his life and activities except to the extent that it helps provide a better understanding of his ideas.

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Arizmendiarieta, through the years, left copious written records of his thought, some unpublished, that have been collected and jealously treasured by the Caja Laboral Popular, which put all this material in our hands with an invitation to examine it. The study now presented to the public is based on the results of this

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<sup>34</sup> Ib. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Barlow, M., *El socialismo de Mounier*, Nova Terra, Barcelona 1975, 86.

analysis, which, beginning with the initiative of the Caja Laboral Popular, was the object of the author's doctoral thesis, presented at the School of Philosophy and Sciences of Education of the University of the Basque Country/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea. It has been lightly re-touched which, while not changing the basics, we hope will facilitate the reading thereof, as well as the placement of Arizmendiarieta's thought in the context in which it was developed.

I would like to express here my recognition of the Directors of the Caja Laboral Popular and of the Polytechnical Professional School in Arrasate/Mondragon, who put their corresponding archives and libraries at my full disposal for this study. Likewise, I must record the great deal of help, criticism, and clarification received from direct disciples or followers of Arizmendiarieta, who are active repositories of his thought: the interest with which they have followed the development of this work since the first moment, their contributions of unedited or unknown material, their constant and kind availability for consultations, and their information—always prompt and accurate—have been of incalculable value. I hope that my many good friends who are well deserving of a mention will forgive my silence, in the interest of avoiding clumsy omissions, and that, nonetheless, they will let me highlight, for all of them, the indispensable bibliographical help and guidance from M.<sup>a</sup> Jesús Zabaleta, of the Caja Laboral Popular, and the ever-discreet but particularly efficient collaboration of Juan Leibar, Secretary of the Polytechnical Professional School and custodian of the Arizmendiarieta Archives.

This study also would not have been possible without the help of the editorial team of *Jakin* magazine, in Donostia/San Sebastián,

in whose bosom I have received constant encouragement, with more than a few observations, and I have been able to enjoy the favors of teamwork. This team comprised the initial discussion and opinion-sharing forum, and later served as the test bench to assess the validity of the organized systematic doctrinal work. In particular, I cannot hide the debt owed to Joseba Intxausti, whose labor of permanent critical revision has been remarkably valuable to me, both for its close and continuous nature and for the important historical suggestions that have been definitively incorporated into the work. Finally, I need to recognize that without the selfless and intelligent collaboration of Mila and Pili Larrea, this work could not have been carried out with the required accuracy and rigor in the detailed matching of sources.

I readily recognize that only the abundant help I have received has made it possible to study a topic that seemed unmanageable as much for its breadth as, above all, the dispersion of the materials to analyze, with the added difficulty of the lack of prior studies to set an objective starting point for the research. The criticisms, observations, and suggestions, and the assistance of so many people of good will have sustained this prolonged effort to clarify one of the most recent, yet least known, chapters in the labor history of Euskal Herria [*the Basque Country*].

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In only a few years, the studies dedicated to the Mondragon cooperative experience have multiplied. In recent years, more than forty specialized books and booklets could be named in which this experience is analyzed, as well as innumerable articles.

The topic also appears to have become a favorite object of cutting-edge academic research. After the first analyses were carried out in the '70s in French universities (Burdeos, Grenoble, Paris), just in the brief interval of 1980-1982, no fewer than eight doctoral theses have been presented on the Mondragon cooperative phenomenon at universities in Great Britain, the U.S., Sweden, and Italy (none, in contrast, at Spanish universities). While the researchers' interest has been predominantly directed towards economic and business matters, the Schools of Geography and Anthropology have not been absent from these studies, and, surprisingly, the topic has merited three doctoral theses in philosophy at U.S. universities.

It may seem a bit strange to add that, of all these studies, not one has been centered on research into the thought that has served as the basis of this experience: the concepts of man, of labor, of community, etc., that have inspired this movement, ideas that this experience has tried to make a reality and embody in lasting institutions. That is, no one, until now, has decided to do a systematic study of Arizmendiarieta's thought, which has been the education of cooperators, the inspiration of the movement and the greatest (though always modest) leader of the Mondragon cooperative experience. This is the case, however, and there is quite a simple explanation.

The first and most basic reason for this lack of studies lies in the state of the sources. Arizmendiarieta poured out his ideas in a multitude of conferences, sermons, study circles, readings he recommended to cooperators, etc., especially through articles, which he published year after year in little magazines that he himself founded over and over, keeping pace with the successive

interventions by relevant official agencies of the dictatorship. These were, as we will see, magazines with minimal circulation, including one that was small enough to go on a bulletin board in the difficult post-war years. Even the cooperative newsletter *T.U., Trabajo y Unión* [Work and Union], the most important source for understanding Arizmendiarieta's thought in its last phase, was founded in 1960 with a circulation of only 550 copies. It is true that by 1973, it had reached 9,600 copies monthly, but these were passed between cooperative members in the factories themselves.<sup>36</sup> As a result, it has been practically impossible for researchers to access the sources, especially those from before 1960. The fact that Arizmendiarieta wrote his articles both in Euskara and in Spanish constitutes another difficulty.

This situation changed recently, when all of Arizmendiarieta's articles were published. J.M. Mendizabal took it upon himself to patiently collect all of Arizmendiarieta's dispersed articles, notes, conferences, and manuscripts, successfully completing a formidable task. On this basis, and with the collaboration of various people who knew Arizmendiarieta, an edition has been produced of his *Complete Works* in 15 extensive volumes. This edition, which was mostly limited to universities and other centers of learning, constituted the basic source of our study. At the same time, a *Selected Works of Arizmendiarieta* was also published in two volumes, which we funded, as well as an

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<sup>36</sup> Internal report by J. Leibar, entitled *TU-Trabajo y Unión, Información*, from November, 1973 (Archive Arizmendiarieta). Every month for 16 years (188 editions), from the founding of the magazine until his death, Arizmendiarieta wrote the editorial for this publication.

anthology of Arizmendiarieta's thoughts and sayings, also under our responsibility. With this prior work of critical reconstruction of the sources, the foundation was laid for the present research.

The *Complete Works*, given its size, had a small circulation. This fundamental work, therefore, will remain difficult to access, except for a small number of researchers and specialists. This is why we had no qualms about presenting lengthy texts from Arizmendiarieta in our study, instead of just using simple footnotes.

The years of work at reconstructing the sources have unquestionably borne generous fruit. Even so, the predominant characteristic of the sources for the study of Arizmendiarieta continues to be dispersion. We will now distinguish between an internal and an external dispersion.

External dispersion: it has proven possible to bring together the literature by Arizmendiarieta, but there is a long way left to go to do the same with the literature about Arizmendiarieta and about the cooperative movement, which remains dispersed. This study is, we hope, a first effort to collect and encompass all that literature. However, the geographic and, above all, linguistic dispersion of the materials (there are materials in Japanese, Hebrew, Korean, etc.) make the work enormously difficult by requiring collaboration with translators, who are not always available. We must recognize our inevitable shortcomings in this field. On the other hand, during the dictatorship, an abundant underground literature flourished, which is difficult to access today, with rich material for and against the Mondragon cooperative movement, and with which Arizmendiarieta held a

lengthy argument. This delicate topic will be addressed for the first time in our study, and we believe we have achieved a difficult, but satisfactory, reconstruction of the polemic process. First and foremost, research into the very rich material contained in the archives of Mondragon's Polytechnical Professional School and the Caja Laboral Popular has been essential. In these archives, over the years, Arizmendiarieta himself and his collaborators accumulated an immense amount of material which, not being ordered or classified (the project is under way), requires the researcher to do patient work in sorting and selecting. What is especially important in these archives is Arizmendiarieta's materials which, after his death, were transferred to the Archives of the Professional School. The material kept by Arizmendiarieta over the years is limitless: from class notes or notebooks of Examinations of Conscience in Seminary, safe conducts and other notes from the war, trip receipts, private meditations, to wide-ranging correspondence (which goes from family correspondence and spiritual direction, to official correspondence with Ministries, the most virulent polemics, and academic correspondence with professors from a wide variety of countries in Europe and the Americas). Everything has been conserved. His personal library, much of which has also been conserved, has been of incalculable value for research into Arizmendiarieta's sources, as have thousands of pages and notes he took on his readings over the years. These archives constituted our second main source in carrying out this study.

We have also referred to an internal dispersion. Perhaps the expression is not quite accurate. Indeed, Arizmendiarieta, who always had trouble expressing himself and apparently never

became fully fluent in the Spanish language,<sup>37</sup> appears to us in his writings struggling tenaciously but uselessly to articulate his ideas. His own words rebel against him. He bogs down in long, tortured sentences, which end up going off in all directions. But this is not only a problem of (obvious) grammatical incorrectness or of style: it is, first and foremost, very much his own way of thinking. It has been said that he was a man of “few truths.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Arco, J.L. del. *El complejo cooperativo de Mondragón*. Asociación de Estudios Cooperativos AECOOP, Madrid. s/f. [1983]. 13, refers to Arizmendiarieta, who, when speaking, thought in Basque and translated into Castillian [Spanish]. The comfortable Mondragon bourgeoisie, annoyed primarily with his social activities, complained, according to testimony from a lady of that same class, “about that priest who didn’t even know how to speak Castillian,” cf. Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 90-91. The same J. Larrañaga, *Hizo camino al andar*, *TU*, Nr. 190, Nov.-Dec. 1976, 24, writes: “Don José María had lived closely connected with Euskera. He acknowledged difficulties in expressing himself in Castillian (...). Rather, he was a monotone and repetitive speaker, who tired those listening to him for the first time. On occasion, he helped people to sleep peacefully as he insisted, with monotonous tenacity, on hammering our ears again and again with audacious ideas and concepts.” He faced the greatest initial difficulties in preaching, which he ended up abandoning altogether. He climbed into the pulpit, as he himself confessed, aware of carrying out “an act of penitence”: “saying what I felt, even at the cost of seeming ridiculous” (ib. 25).

<sup>38</sup> Larrañaga, J., *Don José María Arizmendi-Arrieta y la experiencia cooperativa de Mondragón*, Caja Laboral Popular, 1981, 83. This may be an indirect way of declaring Arizmendiarieta “genuinely Basque,” in both good and bad ways, according to one’s tastes. Continuing an old topic in Castillian literature (cf. Legarda, A. from “The Biscayan” in Castillian literature, Biblioteca Vascongada de Amigos del País, San Sebastián 1953). Diego Laínez characterized Saint Ignatius of Loyola as a man of few, but solid, ideas, thus resulting in the famous comparison of Saint Ignatius and Lenin, developed by R. Füllop-Miller in his book *Macht und Geheimnis der Jesuiten*, Knaur, Berlin 1929 (a comparison which would be accepted by Maritain, J.,

The attentive reader of his writings, on the contrary, is left with the impression of a man overflowing with ideas, which he is unable to contain or sort through. The most notable characteristic of his thought is surely its strong cohesion. Arizmendiarieta feels the tight mutual bond between his ideas so strongly that he seems to want to see them all understood in each one. An attempt to summarize many of his articles would have to resign itself to affirming that they are about “everything”; and the superficial reader would easily conclude, comparing two completely different articles, that they are about “the same thing.” The dignity of man, work, emancipation, classless society, all appear to end up becoming confused. Whatever concept Arizmendiarieta is developing, we will immediately see all the other central ideas come pouring in, and Arizmendiarieta shows himself to be incapable of telling them apart.<sup>39</sup>

All this, it will be said, is exactly the opposite of dispersion. Indeed, this must be recognized. Still, for the researcher, it has the effect of a total dispersion. With only a very few exceptions,

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*Humanisme integral*, Aubier, Paris 1968, 162). Later on, the affirmation of few, but firm, truths, or the other way around, as well as the primacy of common sense over theory, became rather too easy to say about any Basque author (the same thing happened to Larramendi, Arana Goiri, etc., more recently, to Unamuno, and now, to Arizmendiarieta). For this observation to have any validity, which we would not want to deny at all, it would be good to carefully avoid the pretension of making each author into a representative of Basque character or spirit, about which it does not seem legitimate to make too many generalizations.

<sup>39</sup> A young, anonymous critic, “J.M.A.,” would reproach Arizmendiarieta, more rightfully than respectfully, in harsh polemics in the ’70s, for his expressions and “confused” ideas. These polemics will be addressed in Chapter 8 of this study.

nowhere did Arizmendiarrieta leave us limited, systematic discussions on major topics of his thought. In a writing on education, the reader finds the loveliest ideas on work; reflections on work contain, unexpectedly, the finest exposition on his concept of the dignity of man; a meditation on the dignity of man is, for Arizmendiarrieta, a good time to return to the topic of work, of education, of cooperation... The researcher is forced to painstakingly glean Arizmendiarrieta's ideas from here and there, to reconstruct his concepts, and discovers, to his surprise, once he has placed all the pieces in the puzzle, a wealth of nuances, of suggestions and relationships that each concept takes on as he reflects on it. The analysis of the variation in the nuances in each concept, more than the variety of topics, seems to us the main source for the study of the evolution of his thought. This study will pay special attention to this aspect.

Due to all this, our attempt to reduce Arizmendiarrieta's free and spontaneous thought to a system, with the obligatory static structure of divisions and subdivisions, is inevitably going to be rather artificial. Arizmendiarrieta's thought blossomed in the midst of action, always adapted to it, fragmentary, without systematic concerns. However, we believe that this sacrifice of its liveliness was neither in vain nor unjustified.

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We have referred to the state of the sources; we will now spell out the purpose of our study.

This is the first systematic study of Arizmendiarieta's thought. That was decisive when it came time to propose our objectives. First of all, we thought it necessary to understand that thought in all its breadth. We consider this beginning to be an indispensable, methodical requirement, so that ensuing studies will be able to deal with particular aspects as case studies without risk of distortion.

Secondly, together with this purpose of totality, our interest is centered, right from the beginning, on a question: throughout so many years, and in such diverse reflections, is there a framework, a coherent system of thought that gives unity to diversity, or rather, deals with loose, disconnected reflections? What relationship is there, for example, between Arizmendiarieta's reflections on work with his religious, educational, and political ideas? We must remember that the writings themselves are always occasion-specific, and apparently have no mutual relationship. If indeed such a system existed, the next step would doubtlessly be to define it. Anticipating one of the conclusions of the study, we can say that this systematic connection really did exist, and was even conspicuous, though we will need to qualify that statement momentarily. In this study, then, we have worked to discover the systematic unity underlying the diversity. And we have also proposed, as stated earlier, to methodically bring together in this system all the main aspects of his thought—religious, moral, economic, and political—without overlooking any, however distant it may appear from his principle concerns. We have preferred to sin on the side of maximizing rather than omitting.

Finally, a third objective must be cited as a concern that cannot be

ignored: Arizmendiarieta's thought, through his writings, underwent a dramatic evolution between 1941 and 1976. We have worked, to the extent that it does not conflict with our second systematic objective, to analyze the causes and ways in which this has happened over the years. But we always recognize the primacy of the systematic, not historical, exposition of his thought.

Therefore, we once again alert the reader that this study proposes to carry out a systematic study, not a historical study, of Arizmendiarieta's thought. In this regard, the biographical notes in this study have a merely complementary value.

Certainly, a historical analysis of his development would highlight nuances in many ways. It would shine another light on the intellectual personality of Arizmendiarieta, who, starting from the most modest and traditional presuppositions,<sup>40</sup> was able to raise himself to a high level of reflection and study. This struggle for liberation and building on his own roots, remaining critically faithful to them, is not the least admirable characteristic of this priest, who—R. Tamames<sup>41</sup> has compared him to Father Llanos in the Madrid neighborhood of Pozo del Tío Raimundo—would end up as an “antimodel” in an uncomfortable position within his

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<sup>40</sup> Especially in the field of religion (proofs of the divinity of Christ: prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, etc.) and morality.

<sup>41</sup> Tolentino, J., Ramón Tamames, *Realidad y Mito del Cooperativismo de Mondragón*. Tribuna Vasca, No. 17, 29 August 1982.

own church.<sup>42</sup> We believe, however, that even to understand this process in depth, it would be good to begin with a systematic study, without entirely giving up on the historical aspects.

We must confess, moreover, that our claim to be the first to study Arizmendiarieta's thought cannot be understood in an absolute sense. All of the authors who have been interested in the Mondragon cooperative phenomenon have also studied the figure of Arizmendiarieta and his thought. But all of them, out of necessity, have had to do so very briefly and without being able to avail themselves of his own writings, except on a very limited basis.<sup>43</sup> With that, we dispense with the need to refer to the current state of research into our topic. The only exception, if we overlook the above-mentioned work by J. Larrañaga, which remains a basic introduction to the topic, is the partial studies by S. Mtz. de Arróyabe.<sup>44</sup> However, apart from the fact that his main study is unpublished, we believe that our analysis differs from it both in the pursued objective and in the method, as well as in the

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<sup>42</sup> Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 72-80.

<sup>43</sup> Such as one of the most precise works, the beautiful summary by Q. Garcia, in his doctoral thesis, *Les coopératives industrielles de Mondragon*, Les Editions Ouvrières, Paris, 1970, in which it is reduced to only seven pages. R. Oakeshott sums up Arizmendiarieta's thought in thirty lines (based, moreover, not on his writings, but on conversations with him). D. Aranzadi limits himself to five introductory pages, etc.

<sup>44</sup> Besides the article "Utopías y revolución. Aproximación al pensamiento de D. José María," *TU*, Nr. 190, Nov.-Dec. 1976, 44-49. S. Mtz. de Arróyabe has written an extensive analysis entitled *Don José María Arizmendiarieta, Su ideario*, 1975 (unpublished, 255 pgs., CLP archives).

breadth of the sources on which it is based.

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Indeed, this study of Arizmendiarieta's thought proposes to encompass it to its full extent, being based not on select articles, but on the entirety of his texts; being limited to written documents, rather than personal oral testimony and references, the obligatory main source of all preceding studies.

That is not to devalue the testimonies of those who knew him and lived alongside him. We ourselves have made use of them on various matters we were unable to clarify using existing documents. Moreover, the legitimacy of the documentation through testimonies has been confirmed in the tributes paid in writing to the memory of Arizmendiarieta by the cooperative members themselves. We believe that the collection of testimonies should continue. However, given the nature of this study, we felt obliged to limit ourselves to written, documentary sources. This simple decision, by itself, distinguishes our study from earlier studies.

In the writing style we have adopted, we will deal separately with Arizmendiarieta's thought and his historical-social environment, as well as his sources. This writing method may turn out to be a bit disconcerting, so we will take the liberty of stopping to explain the reasons that led us to this decision.

Arizmendiarieta, whose writings fill 15 volumes, never published a single book during his life. The overwhelming majority of the

727 writings of his that we possess (excluding correspondence), are brief texts. They deal with the most wide-ranging topics (business financing, entertainment of youth, the dignity of man, a Eucharistic Congress, the crisis of western culture, electoral campaigns in France); they are directed to completely heterogeneous audiences (landlords, economists, workers, priests, women, youth, businesspeople, soldiers); they are of highly varied natures (annual reports of the Caja Laboral Popular, school-year inauguration speeches, sermons, presentations at national congresses, training talks for workers, academic conferences, small articles). They are very diverse, both in form and content. We will not try to hide that the reconstruction of a system of thought through such disparate texts, making the absolute best possible use of them, has presented no few difficulties. In all things, we are considering an obligatory starting point for any future reader who may become interested in Arizmendiarieta's writings. This underlying architecture and systematic unity, apparently so foreign to the texts, when they are considered in isolation, should be highlighted in its purity and fullness of form, because it constituted an original objective of this study, and we hope that it will also be its main contribution.

A second reason to write separately about Arizmendiarieta's system of thought on the one hand, and about his sources and surroundings on the other hand, is that while Basque cooperativism and Arizmendiarieta's personality have become relatively well-known, it must be recognized that Arizmendiarieta's thought, as a body, remains unknown, even

nearly.<sup>45</sup> These pages aspire to make this thought known. It must also be added that the brief studies that have existed up until now could easily contribute to a deformed idea of that thought. That is the third reason to opt for the above-mentioned writing method.

Arizmendiarieta's thought does not begin or end with the topic of cooperativism, though his most noteworthy contributions are in this vein. Before he was a cooperativist, Arizmendiarieta was a Personalist; before he had formulas for business, he had a philosophy of the person—not only in a logical, successive, foundational order, but even in a temporal sense, in his life. His concept of business, for which he has gained fame, is no more than the consequence of that philosophy, and without it, is reduced to a mere business formula, lacking its principal theoretical support. That is why our writing will clearly distinguish the first book, concerning the person, from a second book concerning business. We would define the relationship between the parts as the relationship between their premises and their necessary implications.

The aspect that suffers most from a separate treatment, such as that which has been adopted for the writing of this study, is doubtlessly the analysis of doctrinal sources: in the first place, because it made it difficult to write in a detailed and precise way; and, also, later, because it required tedious repetition. Given the fact that, in Arizmendiarieta's case, he cannot be described as

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<sup>45</sup> Tolentino, J., op. cit., 1, wrote: "Thus, at our university, the students know the ideas of Milton Friedman by heart, and absolutely nothing about who a man named José María Arizmendi-Arrieta was."

particularly original on the whole, the problem of his sources appears rather secondary, and seemed to us to legitimize separate treatment of this topic, as well.

Arizmendiarieta's sources can basically be divided into four groups: 1) Christian social doctrine, 2) the Personalist thinkers, primarily Maritain and Mounier, 3) Basque social tradition, particularly the Social Christian tradition of the "propagandist priests," on the one hand, and the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores, Union of General Workers) supporters and socialists, on the other hand, especially believers in "Eibar socialism," and 4) the classics of cooperativism (P. Lambert, etc.). More briefly, we can refer to his social and philosophical sources. J.L. del Arco, Arizmendiarieta's friend and legal counselor, has justly recognized in his cooperative ideas "a complete coincidence with cooperative orthodoxy, just as it has been written about by so many authors and by me, myself."<sup>46</sup> The same can be affirmed about his philosophical sources. Arizmendiarieta shows an extraordinary fidelity to his sources, sometimes literal, perhaps due to the difficulty he had with his own formulations. As for the rest, his principal philosophical sources, such as the integral humanism of Maritain, *Esprit* magazine, and Mounier's *Manifesto* at the service of personalism, are sufficiently well-known texts still today that we can dispense with having to indicate in each case Arizmendiarieta's manifest debts.

The strength and vigor of Arizmendiarieta's thought do not

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<sup>46</sup> Arco, J.L. del, op. cit., 56.

reside in its originality, but rather in its capacity to synthesize and in its pragmatic sense, without giving up on utopia. He was able to build, extracting his materials from such diverse quarries, his own extraordinarily solid and coherent system of thought. He knew how to carry out a harmonic synthesis of Personalism and cooperation, philosophy and economy, study and work. To analyze and explain this synthesis, which is what is most his own in Arizmendiarrieta's thought, constitutes, as stated earlier, the principal objective of this study.

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Arizmendiarrieta shares with the French Personalists, especially Maritain and Mounier, both their diagnosis of the current crisis of culture and their proposed solution, the path of a new, integrated humanism, or a Personalist society. However, where he differed from those authors, who demanded the implementation of new guiding principles in the economy, without stopping to explain them (except, to a limited extent, Mounier), was that Arizmendiarrieta would propose the development of the principles of a Personalist economy as an objective. He would do so primarily, though not exclusively, by turning to the tradition of cooperative socialism.

Though Arizmendiarrieta was not the first to recognize the proximity of the Personalist inspiration to the cooperative tradition and the "utopian socialists" (Owen, Fourier, Buchez, L. Blanc), he is, without doubt, one of the most dedicated people to give himself over to carrying out this synthesis of modern Personalist philosophy and social "communionist," or

cooperative, utopianism. He was convinced, as were all the Personalists, that bourgeois culture, while not actually dead, did not deserve to live, and sought to define the basis of a new order tailored to mankind.

What does Arizmendiarieta's thought mean? Considering it first in relation to Maritain and Mounier, to whom he owes a philosophical debt, it is clear that Arizmendiarieta has moved beyond them in the development of Personalist economic principles. Remember that Maritain, in a vision of historical development in stages, appeared to postpone the installation of the Personalist order until after the material and moral liquidation of capitalism,<sup>47</sup> though he considered that imminent. Arizmendiarieta, understanding Personalist action in the economy as not so much a consequence of the liquidation of capitalism, but as an instrument for it, would develop a model that brought the Personalist order to realization, in a limited setting, within and against capitalism, without waiting for its historical liquidation.

Above all, it is the restless and revolutionary spirit of Mounier (though not the richness of his language) that is palpable in Arizmendiarieta's texts. *The Principles of an Economy at the Service of the Person*, by Mounier,<sup>48</sup> fill Arizmendiarieta's pages. But, Arizmendiarieta also represents an advance beyond Mounier,

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<sup>47</sup> Maritain, J., *Humanisme intégral*, Aubier, Paris 1968, 195-196.

<sup>48</sup> Mounier, E., *Manifiesto al servicio del personalismo*, Taurus, Madrid 1972, 147-171.

primarily in the sense of the development and manifestation of the general principles expounded by the master. This is worth noting both for the principle of the primacy of labor over capital<sup>49</sup> and for the demands of education,<sup>50</sup> or for the concept of authority and hierarchical order in Personalist democracy (“where the capacity to rule is born of personal merit and is, above all, a vocation of awakening personalities”),<sup>51</sup> etc., etc.

On one decisive point, above all, Arizmendiarieta represents a qualitative leap beyond Mounier: in his trust in the workers’ capacity for self-management and what can be derived from it. Mounier, still doubtful of working-class consciousness, did not believe the time had come “to elevate the global and unformed mass of workers to direct partners in production.”<sup>52</sup>

Arizmendiarieta, on the contrary, believed that workers are mature; it is the employer/manager class which, because of its selfish interests, shows itself to be immature and incapable of decisively launching the construction of a new era of humanity, the Era of Man.

Arizmendiarieta was not free of the proverbial difficulties of the prophet in his own land. Both his ideas and his accomplishments had numerous critics, especially in the tumultuous years between 1970 and 1975. As so often happens, so it was on this occasion that

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<sup>49</sup> Ib. 152.

<sup>50</sup> Ib. 158.

<sup>51</sup> Ib. 160.

<sup>52</sup> Ib. 159.

recognition appeared to come, via a circuitous route, from abroad. For our part, we have chosen not to do a critical evaluation of his positions, since a lengthy chapter dedicated to polemics sheds enough light on the state of the issue before us at the moment.

We do not believe it is our role to judge his accomplishments. It has already been noted that this is not a study of cooperativism, but of Arizmendiarieta's thought.

Speaking of his ideas, we must point out that they signify an endless search. He started with traditional concepts in his time, although the general crisis, of which he was very aware, had also brought those beliefs into crisis. Arizmendiarieta's thought, which developed according to events, would undergo a major evolution. Two principal elements would remain constant in this evolutionary process: his faith in people and his unlimited trust in workers. Perhaps the history of his thought could be summed up as a continuous deepening of the meaning of work for people. His last stage was, in fact, an attempt at a social summation of work, from childhood to old age, in its dual aspects of human realization and the social realization of the classless society.

From the particular perspective of Euskadi, we believe that Arizmendiarieta has contributed to its people the most serious reflection yet done on the topic of work. Together with Barandiarán and Lekuona, his teachers in his youth, Arizmendiarieta is due, as a necessary complement to them, a place of honor among those who have worked to open paths of comprehension and historical achievement to the Basque people. This people has needed many teachers to discover its history, its language, its traditions, its literature, its people's dignity. No one,

more than Arizmendiarrieta, has held forth the manifesto that the history of a people ultimately rests on the seemingly humble base of its work.

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