

B) Sociological view of the crisis

At the beginning of 1941, two priests were simultaneously sent to Mondragon: D. José Luis Iñarra, as parson, and D. José María Arizmendiarieta, recently ordained as a priest, as curate.

J.M. Mendizábal recounts it this way: “The then Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Vitoria told *don* José Luis that he had to go to Mondragon. *Don* José Luis put up some objections—among others, that he was not an expert in social issues, and Mondragon was a working class town. Mons. Lauzurica reassured him, telling him that he would send him a recently ordained priest who knew about that. This was *don* José María.”¹

However, the first field of activity assigned to Arizmendiarieta was youth, not workers.² He then expanded his parochial activity into other fields: parents, etc. Only little by little did he enter the social field. Arizmendiarieta’s first writings centered directly and fully on social matters are after 1945. These writings—conferences, notes—show a view of the crisis that is quite different from the one just discussed, even though the general purpose continues to be the same in both: the creation of a new social order in correspondence with the Christian vision of life.

7. Historical observations

Just as we did in part A, we will begin with a historical introduction, which allows us to better understand the evolutionary process of Arizmendiarieta’s thought.

7.1 War wounds

Father José María Llanos, director of the Diocesan Secretariat of Exercises in Madrid in the years 1942-1952, conclusively describes the spirit of the militant Catholicism of that time: “‘For the empire, towards God.’ For the Exercises towards [...], an anti-Maritainian and closed Christianity.”³ Maritain basically did not fit in the system. His translations were primarily published in Buenos Aires. A young Maritainian or Mounierist priest in the middle of the period of the 40s is noteworthy.

However, that will surely seem less surprising, if we consider Arizmendiarieta’s surroundings. It proves, in fact, that Arizmendiarieta also falls within what has come to be called “the case of the Basque cleric.”

It looks like Arizmendiarieta came to know Mounier’s thought by the time of his studies in the Seminary of Vitoria.⁴ The same thing can be presumed about Maritain, with somewhat greater probability. Whatever the case, we are inclined to think that the influence of these thinkers in Arizmendiarieta begins to really take on importance in the late ’40s and early ’50s.

Maritain, Mounier, and the French Personalist movement were already well-known in Euskadi before the war. The Christian Basque social movement, then at its vigorous peak, held them in high esteem.⁵ However, the

¹ Arizmendiarieta, J.M., *Conferencias de Apostolado Social*, Caja Popular, 1978, 8.

² Leibar, J., “José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga. Apuntes para una biografía,” *T.U., Trabajo y Unidad*, Nr. 190, Nov.-Dec. 1976, 50-60.

³ Llanos, P.J.M. *Cursos de cristianismo acelerado. Ejercicios espirituales, Hechos y Dichos*. Nr. 465, 1975, 40-43.

⁴ Larrañaga, J., *Don José María Arizmendiarieta y la experiencia cooperativa de Mondragón*, Caja Popular, 1981, 38. All in all, a professor of Arizmendiarieta’s who was a disciple of Mounier in a rigorously academic sense seems unlikely; more likely, he would have been a studious follower of his ideas.

⁵ Tusell, J., *Historia de la Democracia cristiana en España*, Cuadernos para el Diálogo, Madrid 1974, vol. II, 95 and 115. That, in Tusell’s opinion, “would be enough to prove the falsity of a statement, which does not become any less inaccurate through repetition: that Basque nationalism was, from the theoretical point of view, something entrenched in the past. On the contrary, the nationalists were in contact with the most modern Catholic thought of the times” (95). Since the second half of 1934, in *Euzkadi* magazine, where a section entitled “Social labor” already existed, “there also appeared a periodic section entitled *Esprit Nouveau Basque*, very related, as its name indicates, to French and Belgian publications of the times. This section had a markedly youthful, democratic, and social tone; in it subjects of undeniable relevance for the moment were dealt with: the Christian value of democracy, the Christian revolution, and the desire to make the proletariat disappear through access to property” (89-90).

renown of these authors would reach their high point when, in the civil war, reviled by their own Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, slandered, scorned and excommunicated by the Spanish hierarchy,⁶ and despised by the Vatican, Basque nationalists find in them the only defenders of their cause in a Catholic world entirely favorable to Franco.⁷ “In that climate of hatred and fanaticism,” writes the priest Pius Montoya, “of misunderstanding and loneliness that we found ourselves in, the help from the few Catholic intellectuals who raised their voices in our favor is doubly remarkable: Mauriac, Bernanos, Cardinal Verdier, Bishop Mathieu, and above all, Maritain, are names who we can never forget.”⁸ Maritain, especially would be covered with merit for participating actively, going from words to deeds on the committee for aid to exiled Basques, as vice-president of the “Ligue Internationale des Amis des Basques.”⁹

Because of its intellectual prestige and its influence on Catholic media all over the world, the Spanish right wing found Maritain’s position scandalous, since, from the beginning, he had defined himself clearly against “the myth of holy war,” considering it an “Islamization of the religious conscience,” which could have no other effect than the multiplication of sacrileges on all sides.¹⁰ Contrary to the feeling of the Spanish Catholic hierarchy, Maritain judged the Spanish Civil War as a dishonor for Europe, and the pretension of holy war as insulting to God.¹¹ If it is a sacrilege, he replied, to kill and destroy what has been consecrated to God, temples and priests, it is no less sacrilege to kill and destroy that which God most loves, the poor, even if they were “Marxists.”¹² And if it is a sacrilege to drop bombs on the temple of Pilar, it is a much greater sacrilege to bomb defenseless civilian populations like Guernica and Durango.¹³ “Kill yourself,” he declared, “if you believe you must kill yourself in the name of the social order or of the nation (...); do not kill yourself in the name of Christ the King, who is not a warlord, but rather a King of grace and of charity, who died for all men.”¹⁴

Arizmendiarieta was unable to access these texts from Maritain in their day, since they were being published in *Euzko Deya* around the same date that his sentence was handed down in a summary trial in Bilbao. But, it is difficult to imagine that he did not learn of them quite soon. They have to do, at any rate, with Arizmendiarieta’s first “case,” that we know of, in Mondragon.

In his preaching, Arizmendiarieta referred frequently to war in general, but never directly to the Spanish Civil War. However, a statement of his that every war has materialist motives, an affirmation that dates back at least to Plato (Resp., II, 14, nn. 373 ff.), provoked the irate protest of a parishioner, convinced that “Spain’s war was made to safeguard Catholic Christian civilization.”¹⁵ After enumerating the crimes of the “reds” and proving abundantly, with texts from Lenin and with quotes from the Pontiffs and from the Spanish hierarchy, that the civil war was, in fact, a holy Crusade, he concluded the protest: “And this issue being, as is it, resolved by the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR A PREACHER TO COME AND AFFIRM THE OPPOSITE. That is to scandalize souls, as, in fact,

⁶ Iramuno, J. from *El Clero Vasco*, Bayonne 1946, 4.

⁷ We will quote, of the already numerous literature on these facts, only the fundamental work of Iturralde, J. from, *El Catolicismo y la Cruzada de Franco*, 3 vols., Egi-Indarra, 1965.

⁸ Montoya, P., in: Ibarzabal, E., *50 Años de nacionalismo vasco 1928-1978*, Ed. Basque, Bilbao 1978, 48. “Jacques Maritain, relates P. Montoya, was totally identified with our cause and defended us with special zeal. As all we know, it was his foreword to the book *Aux origines d’une tragedie de Mendizabal*, that caused such disturbance in international Catholic media and disapproval among the Spanish—Father Pérez de Urbel described it as Maritainian “heresy”—the cause for which Franco demanded from Gomá that the Spanish Bishops define their position on the conflict, which they did, obediently, in the sadly famous Pastoral Letter of July first, 1937, undersigned by all the Bishops, with the exceptions, naturally, of Vidal i Barraquer and Mateo Múgica.” For more on Mounier’s support, see Onaindia, A. de, *Hombre de paz en la guerra*, Ed. Basque Ekin, Buenos Aires 1973, 100 and 306.

⁹ *Euzko Deya*, Nr. 161, 21 May 1939 (Special edition). For the topic of Maritain and the Basques in the Civil War, see also the same magazine: No. 21, 7 February 1937; Nr. 66, 25 July 1937; Nr. 67, 1 August 1937; Nr. 68, 8 August 1937; Nr. 69, 15 August 1937; Nr. 101 27 March 1938.

¹⁰ *Euzko Deya*, Nr. 67, 1 August 1937. Maritain replied this way to the Dominican Father Menen-Dez-Reigada, I.G., *La guerra nacional española ante la moral y el derecho*, La Ciencia Tomista, Salamanca 1937, fasc. 1 and 2.

¹¹ *Euzko Deya*, Nr. 69, 15 August 1937.

¹² *Euzko Deya*, Nr. 68, 8 August 1937.

Quotation is original.

¹³ *Ib.*

¹⁴ *Ib.*

it has scandalized us. Yesterday, I did not hear him, but I received commissions protesting the way that he did so (...). Reflect. You found a people in peace. Let them not come to us to divide us with these things, because I know that after the sermon, groups are formed, some very happy because the preacher has sided with them, and others, in contrast, outraged by what they have heard.”

Only two months later, the following (handwritten) letter was sent Arizmendiarieta, as the head of Catholic Action, from the Delegate¹⁵ of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange and of the JONS in Mondragon:

Mr. *don* José María Arizmendi-Arrieta

Present

My dear sir: For days, I have observed that the portrait of the Ex-captives for God and for Spain has disappeared from our Catholic Spanish Action Center. Was it perhaps due to forgetfulness that it does not occupy its place, which should be distinguished after the Sacred Heart, the Roman Pontiff, and our Generalissimo Franco?

I expect that your righteous conscience will be able to correct this deficiency and even return it to the place which it previously occupied to avoid my Hierarchical superior finding out.

May God keep Spain always, and you many years.

Arizmendiarieta, after some consultations with his ecclesiastical superiors, did not admit said portrait back into the Center.

These anecdotes have no other value than to remind us of the tense post-war environment. They indicate to us that it is necessary to know how to read between the lines and, above all, pay attention to that which, in Arizmendiarieta's writings, goes unmentioned or is simply suggested, no less than to what is said. All this also gives us cause to remember the principles by which Arizmendiarieta wanted see the Catholic Action Center ruled, as he himself discussed the first of June of 1941, upon taking charge of the Center. This Worker Center had been converted, after the occupation, into a political circle; it was taken from the owner group, with no compensation, to become the Catholic Action Center, for the sufficient reason, as the bill of return informs us, that the group had made no economic contribution to the cause of the National Uprising. Arizmendiarieta's text, while rather extensive, is interesting because it announces to us, at an early date, the major topics that will be constant in his work.

As the first to rise to speak, it falls to me to justify our presence in this locale, which has a history of 38 years, with a rather troubled history, like that of this town of Mondragon, because, being located, as it was, in the center of town, it has been unable to remove itself from political and social upheavals, despite having been established to shelter in its rooms those who were of a mind to live far from politics, which always divides, shrinks, and embitters the heart.

(...) Born in those years in which the seed sown by some social apostles was beginning to bear fruit, it was called the Worker Center. The social Encyclicals of Leo XIII had come to saturate the environment of the times

¹⁵ Letter from X.X. (we omit the name for obvious reasons) to Mr. *don* José Luis Iñarra (Parish priest) of 30 March, 1942. Arizmendiarieta Archive. It also seems that this time, Arizmendiarieta had expressed himself in sufficiently general terms: “In Saturday's sermon,” says the letter, “the preacher made this statement (I will attempt to employ the same words): ‘all wars, the one now and those before, national and international, all of them have been made because of materialist selfishness.’ This was the concrete affirmation. So, then, it can clearly be seen that as he poses it, he also referred to our recent national war, since he made no exceptions. What's more, that with his repeated word ALL, he clearly demonstrated that he also included our war.” That this has sufficed to provoke such a reaction in a person vested in a high rank in the villa can give an idea of the hypersensitivity that reigned in Mondragon after the war.

¹⁶ Letter from X.X. (we omit the name) of 22 May, 1942. Arizmendiarieta Archive.

with social concerns, and after the first phase of sincere enthusiasm, and after the first firm and decisive steps, the enemy began, like always, to sow the seeds of discord and division, so that while Leo XIII was still alive, dissidence and schisms begin, and in his encyclical *Graves de Communi*, published the 18th of January, 1901, he directs a vibrant appeal to Catholics to embrace the bonds of charity and form—abstaining from matters that divide and offend—a common front against social extremists, whose ranks they are joining, and against the tentacles of the liberal bourgeoisie. “Reality demands, and demands vehemently,” says Leo XIII, verbatim, in this encyclical, saying that courage and unity are necessary, “as immense misfortune looms and fearful disasters threaten...” And here in Mondragon, in which the Marxist virus had already penetrated, and above all, ruthless liberalism had put down deep roots in the hearts of many leaders and businesspeople, this Center was created, which, without a focus on unions, struggled for social demands and has fomented the spirit of unity and brotherhood among the Catholics of this villa. This is why it is deduced from reading their early rules that, in the mind of the founders, some of which are present here, this Center was meant to be a social home of the people of Mondragon, in which, in the warmth of the Catholic ideal, it sought to bring together all Catholics and focus them in a tight beam to face both those who exploited the scattered working masses, and those who tried to sow in them, terrain prepared by misery and pain, those social ideas which then showed such a great increase. The objective of this Center was to bring Catholics together more and more, to face common enemies. The idea of the unity and brotherhood of the workers of Mondragon was what induced its founders to create the organization that was called the Worker Center of Mondragon” (PR, I, 15-16).

The objective that Arizmendiarieta proposes to himself and proposes for the former Worker Center, now the Catholic Action Center, is to create a “spirit of brotherhood and unity,” so that peace can be effective in a new order. First, the unity of Catholic workers: Catholic Action is called, in his opinion, “to carry out this magnum opus of world regeneration, creating, in the bosom of society, cores of Christians who, closely united by the bonds of charity and of mutual love, are foci that radiate Christ with their example and with their exemplary life, who, like the early Christian communities, make those who see us exclaim, ‘the whole multitude of the faithful has one heart and one soul’ ” (PR, I, 18). Then the unity of all workers, and of all people, employers and workers, will dissipate hatred and resentment, which cover the Mondragon sky with black clouds, says Arizmendiarieta, foreshadowing new storms (Ib. 16). This is also the mission of the priest, who must act to “cure and heal the wounds opened by hatred and rancor, wounds which, if not healed, can end up infecting the whole social body with gangrene” (Ib. 17).

This is not vain, pious rhetoric. Mondragon had been harshly punished by social struggles and by the civil war.

During the Republic, social instability leads to frequent clashes, both between employers and workers, and between workers of different unions. Employers and upper management of businesses can no longer be seen except with bodyguards.¹⁷ In an order that was more apparent than real, left and right prepare among the shadows for the assault on power. The militant socialists of Mondragon receive instructions on the handling

¹⁷ Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 64, I. Chacón, head of the Unión Cerrajera, describes the old Mondragon as “a hard town, it was, and one of the most brutal. I remember my walks with bodyguards, the street fights and endless upheavals in the period before the civil war” (conversation with Larrañaga).

of weapons and explosives. Since the crisis of '29, all eyes are on the Russian Revolution. The wait is long and tense. The weak bourgeois democracy cannot be consolidated, but neither does it collapse on its own. Crises occur. October third, 1934, Alcalá Zamora entrusts Lerroix with the formation of a new government. This calls the CEDA to power. Immediately, the Left declares a general strike. At dusk on the fourth, the Mondragon socialists rise up in arms: following a long-prepared plan, in a few hours, they occupy the town, take the most important personalities prisoner, and take control of the situation. They fail in the attempt to burn the barracks. But, apart from in Asturias and some industrial centers of Euskadi, the revolution has not been supported. The Mondragon socialists feel isolated. Unfortunately, blood has run: a worker is shot dead. He is a Carlist [*a royalist*]. Some revolutionaries, seeing that their operation has failed, end up hastily killing detainees Marcelino Oreja and Dagoberto Resusta, both prominent personalities in the province.¹⁸

In '36, the Right rebels. The occupying troops enter Mondragon the 26th of September. Their actions would be horrific. The excellent description by J. Larrañaga excuses us from stopping to describe the terror endured by this locksmithing town.¹⁹ We will only note that in the large number of people shot in Mondragon for God and for Spain are three priests: Archpriest and parson *don* José Joaquín Arin and coadjuncts *don* José Markiegi and *don* Leonardo Guridi.²⁰

It was more than a defeat. In Mondragon, and in all Euskadi, the drama of the “holy war” would continue tormenting Basque Catholics, who were among the vanquished. Neither as a former *gudari* [*Basque soldier*], nor as a Maritainian priest, could Arizmendiarieta accept that it had been a war “to safeguard Catholic Christian civilization.” But this opinion was official doctrine, both for the Church and for the State, with logical consequences for a man of public responsibilities.

In post-war Mondragon, the reconciling work of a priest could not have been at all easy. Years later, we still continue to hear the echoes of that conflict. But it is not our task to go into this topic (we only intend to situate Arizmendiarieta’s thought in its context). We will transcribe, to finish this topic in all its breadth, a writ of protest from 1949, directed by “Catholic workers” of Mondragon to the religious magazine *Surge*, of Vitoria:

Director of *SURGE*

Dear Sir:

All wars are bad, but the most repugnant is the civil war, the war between brothers, and after 12 years, the sores from that cursed war remain unhealed, and religious magazines, rather than seek a cure, work to irritate them, many times lacking the truth. The most painful part is that we speak of a magazine of the Diocese of Vitoria.

“*SURGE*,” the monthly priestly magazine of Guidelines of the Apostolate, no. 63, of September of 1949, in its chronicle “Switzerland in black and white” by Casimiro Sanchez Aliseda (?) recounts the following dialogue with a Dutch Father, a missionary in Chile.

¹⁸ Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 50-54. Aguirre, J.A., *Obras Completas*, Sendoa, Donostia/Saint Sebastian 1981, vol. I, 563. ORTZI, *Historia de Euskadi: el nacionalismo vasco y ETA*, Ruedo Ibérico, Paris 1975, 200-201.

¹⁹ Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 59-61. See also: *Mondragon sous le joug fasciste*, *Euzko Deya*, Nr. 37, 4 April 1937.

²⁰ Iturralde, J. from, *La guerra de Franco, los vascos y la Iglesia*, San Sebastián 1978, 365-368. Onaindia, A. from *Hombre de paz en la guerra*, Ed. Vasca Ekin, Buenos Aires 1973, 120-123 (“Datos referentes a la estancia en la cárcel de Ondarreta de San Sebastián de los sacerdotes de Mondragón Sres. Arin, Marquiegui y Guridi”). Larrañaga, J., op. cit., 60, talks about Leonardo Urteaga; all other authors, included Mons. Múgica, *Imperativos de mi conciencia*, talk about Leonardo Guridi.

The missionary Father: “You see, little fathers, my Prelate needs priests. I have orders from him to look for them in Europe, and primarily in Spain, where they already have the advantage of the language.”

Mr. Sanchez answers him: “But reflect. In our diocese, more than four hundred reds were shot. And in all Spain, the dead would be ten thousand. And that is in the diocese in the North of the peninsula...”

Enclosed please find the list of those who were shot in the Archpriesthood of Mondragon, in which there are four priests, five women and fifty men, for a total of 59 shot by the fascists. Now, on your side, publish the list of those shot by our side (by the red side), let us see if it comes to 5, or even 3, and then we’ll move to Archpriesthood of Vergara, and after you publish the list from Vergara, we’ll move to Eibar, etc. and you’ll see who are the champions in the Diocese of Vitoria.

In the Encyclical *Dilectissima nobis Hispania*, His Holiness Pope Pius XI quite clearly told Spanish Catholics, “THE VATICAN, FAR FROM PARTICIPATING IN ANY WAY IN THE PREPARATION FOR SPAIN’S CIVIL WAR, ALWAYS RECOMMENDED CATHOLICS SHOW THE STRICTEST LOYALTY TO THE REPUBLIC AND TO USE ALL LEGAL MEANS FOR ITS DEFENSE” (from the “Osservatore Romano”). If the Spanish cleric had fulfilled the mandates of the Pope on behalf of the Republic, we do not believe there would have been such persecution (with this we do not mean to justify, and we have always condemned, and we will continue to condemn, all that lacks Christian morals).

In these days, everyone also knows (except the Spanish cleric) that our beloved and GREAT PONTIFF PIUS XII does not want any authority or power that comes from force, and condemns “totalitarianism” with these descriptions:

“Cruel and bloody irony,” “State Tyranny,” “Constant threat to the building of peace,” “Reduction of man to a insignificant token in a political game and a number in economic calculations,” “A blurring, with a stroke of the pen, of the confines of States,” “Elimination of immediate decisions from the economy of the people,” “Cruel expulsion of millions of men of their houses and land,” “Crumbling of secular civilization and culture,” “System contrary to the dignity and the good of humankind,” “Will and power of fortuitous groups of interests,” “Incompatible with a healthy and true democracy,” “Dangerous pathogen that poisons the community of nations,” “Aggressive use of force,” “Tomb of holy human freedom.” Pius XII

“Whoever wishes for the star of peace to be born and tarry over human society will cooperate in the State and its power returning to the service of society WITH FULL RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON.” Pius XII

While freedom to form a union, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the rights of the human person are outside of the law, and while we have the law of a totalitarian regime, with true hunger wages, do not believe that you will trick our beloved Pontiff into thinking that in this, we have CHRISTIAN PEACE.

Keep going, keep the music playing, but remember that General Primo de Rivera, with his collaboration, brought us the Republic, and General Franco, with the same collaboration, must bring us communism.

Several Christian workers.²¹

When Arizmendiarieta talks to us about overcoming hatred and resentment, about reconciliation, about overcoming the antipathy of Left

²¹ Written in October of 1949, Arizmendiarieta Archive. A handwritten note warns that the list of names of those who were shot is on separate page (this page is missing). It seems that Arizmendiarieta was not outside of this initiative.

and Right, about collaboration between employer and workers, he is certainly not speaking in general, abstract postulates. He speaks as a former *gudari* and a priest of Mondragon, and speaks for Mondragon, with a very concrete experience behind him and a clear objective before his eyes: it is necessary give this old world up for dead, which has cost so much blood and hatred, to build a new order of dignity and concord.

7.2 1945: Change

The victory of the Allies also meant, indirectly, a defeat for the official Spanish Church, which had celebrated the triumphs of Franco's troops from city to city, and multiplied penitential religious events: " 'the pains of the world,' a call to Catholic Action tells us, 'and the threats against the homeland demand that we live by the spirit of the Church: Lenten slogan of prayer and penitence.'"²²

Pla y Deniel, in his pastoral letter of the 8th of May of 1945, on the occasion of the end of the war, was pressured to declare that the Church is neutral and apolitical, not beholden to any side in the conflict. As Rodriguez de Coro observes, Catholic Action also felt the need to declared itself apolitical, and priestly retreats likewise ended declaring the priest apolitical. "Every bit a distancing of the Church from Francoism," according to this author.²³ It should be added that it was about simple prudential measures, more than a real distancing. At any rate, the system of assurances built in the comfortable interior of the fascist State has been broken. "The reading," comments F. Urbina, "of the reflection of the Church's public life that is the magazine *Ecclesia* allows us to discover a change of style in religious demonstrations and in the attitude of the leaders, coinciding with the defeat of the Axis Powers and the end of WWII. The fascist political context, in which national-Catholicism found comfort—not without its contradictions—crumbles. Later, towards the end of the decade, economic infrastructural determinations will begin to turn in the direction of a decisive social change. But, at the end of the '40s, the change of the political context in Europe creates a vacuum in what had been a stable situation where new questions, intellectual self-criticism and pastoral renewal movements will be located. A change begins of in the life of the Spanish Church which, over time, will reveal its depth and complexity."²⁴

The final defeat was already foreseeable. The triumphalist euphoria gave way to anguish, to the recognition of error, to meditation. In the vacuum that appeared, criticism of Nazism began to be possible in the pages of *Ecclesia* itself. Professor Sánchez Agesta, in his reflections on the person as the beginning and end of every social order, contrasts Nazi racism and its doctrine of "national spirit" with the Personalist doctrine of Pius XII.²⁵ Communism itself seems to no longer absolutely lack any positive significance. It continues to be the black beast, naturally (it could hardly be Pius XII who would give reason to think otherwise), but in December of 1944, *Ecclesia* surprises us with the recognition that communism is not pure evil, but rather responds to a real fact: social injustice. And he arrives at

²² *Ecclesia*, Nr. 191, 10 May 1945, 201.

²³ Rodriguez de Coro, F., *Colonización política del catolicismo*, CAP, San Sebastián 1979, 388. "Nor has there been, nor is there, servitude towards anyone on the part of the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy;" declared Pla y Deniel, "much less has it defended nor does it defend a statist or totalitarian conception. We have always defended the non-involvement of the Church in any political regime." See Arbeloa, V.M., *Aquella España católica*, Ed. Sígueme, Salamanca 1975, 231-286.

²⁴ Urbina, F., "Formas de vida religiosa en España," in *Iglesia y Sociedad en España 1939-1975*, Ed. Popular, Madrid 1977, 43-44.

²⁵ *Ecclesia*, 13 February 1944, 160. The multitude of concepts and expressions coinciding verbatim between this article and Arizmendiarieta's texts on modern totalitarianism, especially Nazism, makes us suppose that our author drew on the reflections of the professor, then a Granadine, for his purposes.

this conclusion: “the solely political suppression of communism, without countermeasures of social revolution, is an inoffensive distraction for the communists and tragic for the suppressors.”

The words of Pius XII in the Christmas radio message of 1944, invoking democracy, will at first find little echo in *Ecclesia*, always so willing to laud the Papal message; and very dubious attitudes in the rest of the ecclesiastic press.²⁶ The Spanish Church still lives immersed in the spirit of the Crusade. However, those words would mean, in opinion of F. Urbina, the “beginning of liberation.”²⁷

The first affected by the German capitulation on the 8th of May was evidently the State that had emerged with Nazi help: Max Gallo has described this moment as “the black night” of Franco’s regime.²⁸ In spite of the difficulties, the opposition remains hopeful: “the day of the capitulation,” writes M. Gallo, “the news broke around three in the afternoon. In groups of resisters, the news is telephoned from one to other. The streets empty out, Falangists are afraid. Immediate action is spoken of by the opposition, by the Allies. In Bilbao and in San Sebastian, Basques go into action, they confront the Civil Guard and, without weapons, are soon arrested, scattered, beaten.”²⁹ Euskadi does not give up.

These are difficult days for the regime. The June 19th conference of Saint Francis rejects a proposal by Mexico for Spain’s entry into the future United Nations. On the 30th, Panama breaks its relations with Spain. The 7th of July, Labour triumphs in England, and Major Attlee, who had visited the republican zone during the Civil War, is named Prime Minister.³⁰ The Big Three Conference, in Potsdam from July 17 to August 2, adopts rigorous measures with respect to Spain.

Franco was able to react to this siege with unquestionable skill, giving his regime a facade of Constitutional and democratic appearance: July 13, the *Fuero de los Españoles* [*the Charter of the Spanish*] is promulgated; the 17th, he proclaims amnesty; the 21st, he forms a new government, decisively substituting Lequerica in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Martín Artajo, a man who was tightly linked to the Church and especially to Herrera Oria.³¹ Leaving the Falangists aside, Franco seeks his principle support in the Church. The 28th of August, Cardinal Primado publishes a pastoral letter, once more legitimizing Franco’s regime. The Church thus assumes, from Toledo and from the Vatican, the function of “main defensive line” of Francoism against the Allies.³² Without a doubt, the official Spanish Church sees its own survival in intimate connection with the regime’s possibilities for survival.

Thus we see, within the two Spains, the reappearance of the two Churches. Indeed, the population, 17% of which is illiterate, lives in misery and ignorance. Spain remains essentially an agrarian nation of landlords and small landowners or *braceros*, who begin to emigrate *en masse* to the cities. Working conditions are terrible: workdays of ten and twelve hours, insufficient wages, unemployment. Easy wealth, on the one hand, for black marketeers, entrepreneurial adventurers and old-time

²⁶ Urbina, F., op. cit., 45. They will have, in contrast, a very positive echo in Arizmendiarieta’s writings.

²⁷ *Ib.* 45.

²⁸ Gallo, M., *Histoire of l’Espagne franquiste*, Marabout Université, Verviers 1969, vol. I, 181.

²⁹ Gallo, M., op. cit., 180 (the translation is ours).

³⁰ Immediately, texts of writers and laborist politicians begin to appear in Arizmendiarieta’s writings (among others, Attlee’s book, *Toward a New Social Structure*, is quoted CAS 82). In the closing speech of the 1945-1946 course, Arizmendiarieta quotes the British Prime Minister together with Pope Pius XI, taking as his own the following terms from the educational and social program of the former: “laborists believe in the abolition of social classes and in the creation of an egalitarian society. They advocate, accordingly, to give the same opportunities to everyone in education. They will abolish class distinctions which, for the most part, are born of differences in education, and will build a common educational fund as unifying factor in the community” (EP, I, 46). “The object of education,” we read below, “is personality development.” The equality of educational opportunities will be based not just in reasons of the humanitarian and personal sort, but rather, first and foremost, on social and communal reasons: “the nation needs the service of all citizens. Today, it fails to take advantage of the enormous quantity of good material that is wasted because of the lack of opportunity for cultural formation” (*Ib.* 47). As we will have occasion to see, these ideas of Attlee’s will also be fundamental in Arizmendiarieta’s thinking.

³¹ Onaindia, A. de, *Hombre de paz en la guerra*, Ed. Vasca Ekin, Buenos Aires, 1973, 195.

³² Gallo, M., op. cit., 184. “Fortunately,” said Pla y Deniel, “the *Fuero de los Españoles*, approved by the Courts (...) and enacted by the Chief of State, marks an orientation of Christian freedom, opposed to statist totalitarianism,” cf. *Ecclesia*, Nr. 217, 8 September 1945.

capitalists; hunger and misery, on the other hand, for a helpless population. It is understandable that, in this situation, the social question is first posed in terms of scandalous inequalities of fortune, of wealth and extreme poverty, such as we find in Pildain, Herrera Oria, and also in Arizmendiarieta's first social writings. Abundant labor makes any protest impossible. The unions are replaced with a single, vertical union, and representative workers' organizations that can demand their rights do not exist. With all other paths closed off and penalized, these would appear in the form of Catholics workers' movements, with the HOAC in 1946, and the JOC in 1947.³³

The first protests, angry in tone, arrive from the Canary Islands, where Mons. Pildain Zapiain, son of Lezo, publishes, beginning in September of 1944 and going through 1945, papers from social conferences held by himself (Lent of 1943), in Las Palmas and Puerto de la Luz, in the form of pastoral letters.

More than in his doctrine, the importance of these interventions of Mons. Pildain lies, without a doubt, in having described reality as it simply was, and in having emerged like a forlorn cry among the chorus of adulatory and triumphalist ideologues. The most disconcerting thing, perhaps, was that Pildain's pastoral letters, written in a bitter, prophetic tone, were a criticism of the Church and of the officially Christian state, made from within, and from conservative positions. Pildain condemned the situation of worker unemployment, the insufficiency of wages, horrendous prices, the ruin of families, the extent of tuberculosis and hunger, and the greed of supposedly Catholic employers. Pildain came to recognize that the strength of communism rests on three truths: the desire to improve the lot of the workers, putting an end to the abuses of the liberal economy, and achieving a fair distribution of wealth. In contrast, the weakness of Christianity lies in possessing a beautiful social doctrine, which neither the supposedly Christian State nor employers want to see put into practice. He declared all the following prisoners of communism: the State, which wastes millions of its budget without remembering its responsibility to God and to society; Catholic employers and industrialists, who oppose the workers' movement (which comes recommended by the Popes), abuse the right to property, and confuse charity and alms with the duties of justice; the Catholic press, always afraid to hurt politicians and plutocrats; Catholic Action itself, if it did not end up understanding its mission of social apostolate.³⁴

The impact was enormous. *Ecclesia* dedicates editorials to commenting on them, and in this magazine, a series of articles will run which, beginning shyly, will deal ever more decisively with social topics. Herrera Oria himself will recognize the social question as one of the bleeding problems that require a decisive and rapid response, attacking the conservative positions of those who "cling to erroneous old ideas, to historical social positions, which are in all ways indefensible today, with irrational and vehement stubbornness, like a child who tries to hold in his hands a toy that does not belong to him."³⁵

³³ Urbina, F., op. cit., 55.

³⁴ Arizmendiarieta read and commented on these pastoral letters from Mons. Pildain in the parish of Mondragon for four consecutive Sundays, cf. SS, II, 306 ff.; the texts of Mons. Pildain are found in the Arizmendiarieta Archive, see Bibliography.

³⁵ *Ecclesia*, 6 January 1945, 18. For a broader discussion, cf. Rodriguez de Coro, F., op. cit., 218-230. There is, in these reflections, from Pildain to the articles in *Ecclesia* and to Mons. Herrera Oria, two aspects that must be highlighted for our purpose. In the first place, all these authors show themselves to sympathetic to State intervention in the case of employers who lack the necessary Christian social consciousness; Arizmendiarieta shows a rather suspicious attitude towards the State: the solution must come not from the State, but from the workers themselves. Secondly, in the face of the reigning patriotism, *Ecclesia* raises social demands, such as demands for authentic patriotism. "(...) It is fitting to wonder if they can feel patriotic toward a State that demands even the blood of those whose situation makes the exercise of virtues and the comprehension of the values of the spirit impossible. This is why the most effective way to fulfill patriotic duties is the defense against internal enemies, against hunger, against misery, against despair, against the sickness or sterility of families, against the infinite and overwhelming series of evils that derive from unemployment and insufficient salaries." The opposition between false political patriotism and authentic social patriotism, born in this Spanish context, will have its repercussions on Arizmendiarieta's thinking.

“If, in 1945,” comments Rodríguez de Coro, “insistence on the social topic seems to gain strength, it is possible that this is due to the end of the war and the consequences in Europe of the socialist triumphs. It was necessary, at least at an expedient level, to disarticulate any complaint of disconsolation in the exercise of this matter, under penalty of lending a certain consent the ‘harakiri’ of the government itself. The communist threat was there, and a mental antidote had to be found to continue meditating with hope.”³⁶

With the war over, the pastoral letter from Cardinal Suhard, archbishop of Paris, on the Christian concept of property, clearly signified the direction the Church in Europe was going to take. The war has ended, the Cardinal of Paris said: the task of every Christian now consists of putting an end to social injustice, without which there will be no true peace. The Church, he underscored, defends the right to property for everyone, not only for a few: it judges the excesses of accumulation, because the reason for the right to property to exist is as a guarantee of personal freedom and dignity; it demands, for this reason, a profound social reform.³⁷

Finally, a controversy was going to make manifest the growing distance between the two Churches. This controversy was going to be led by professor Gregorio R. de Yurre, considered at all times by Arizmendiarieta as his teacher and friend, and one of the thinkers that, undoubtedly, most influenced his thought. Yurre had summarized in *Ecclesia* the resolutions of the Social Week of Toulouse (1946), which referred primarily to the opposition between capital and labor in a capitalist business, condemning the principle of the primacy of capital, and declaring benefit to be the “product of labor by means of capital placed at its disposal.” The capitalist thus lost his position above the business, and became integrated into the “community of labor.” The reaction arrived in the magazine *Mission* (8 December 1946), accusing such conclusions of socializing and being contrary to the social doctrine of the Popes. “Peleón qualified Yurre, overflowing with science, which came from his recent years in Rome, and clarified the question, chiseling a magnificent article that was crafted with the best quotes of the Popes. Yurre, a brilliant scholar—he would be a perpetual student—even mischievous and dapper, though ecclesiastical, could oppose Mr. Ortiz with resourcefulness on these topics, on which he was a specialist. Toulouse’s conclusions: business reform, limitation of property, nationalization or socialization... agreed with the Church’s social doctrine, which is why the writer in *Mission*, having been confronted with these principles, proclaimed by Leo XIII and ratified by the *Anno Quadragesimo* of Pius XI, being directed to the President of these social weeks, talked to him about “structural reform,” and the “development of the notions of property and enterprise.”³⁸

And so, we arrive at Arizmendiarieta’s first writings on purely social topics and destined to the promotion of the social movement: conferences, notes, sermons, studies³⁹ starting in 1945, in the context just described. The great crisis is understood around the social question; the social question is centered on the problem of property.

³⁶ Rodríguez de Coro, F., op. cit., 248.

³⁷ *Ecclesia*, 19 May of 1945, 443: cf. Rodríguez de Coro, F., op. cit., 230-232. The overlap between Arizmendiarieta’s thought and these ideas of Cardinal Suhard, basic in classical Christian social doctrine and repeated insistently by Pius XII starting in 1942, is not enough to prove that Arizmendiarieta had knowledge of that pastoral letter. But that seems presumable.

³⁸ Rodríguez de Coro, F., op. cit., 243-244 (the text appears to contain some printing errata; it was obviously Pius XII who addressed the president of the Social Week of Toulouse, cf. *Ecclesia*, Nr. 283). Arizmendiarieta refers in various places in his writings around 1945-1950 to these articles G.R. de Yurre, cf. CAS 48, 83, 93, 100, 115-116.

³⁹ They have been mostly collected in the volume CAS (Conferences of Social Apostolate) of his *Complete Works*; see also SS, II, PR, I and EP, I.

8. Concerning property

It has already been indicated that Arizmendiarrrieta had a very acute consciousness of living at a crucial point in history. “Probably the history of mankind has seen no stage more agitated than ours” (CAS, 53; cf. SS, II, 158). Generally, Arizmendiarrrieta generously tends to understand this turbulent “stage” as the 19th and 20th centuries, including all the Modern Era, covering, beyond the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment and rationalism. But, unquestionably, he considers the two world wars as the culminating moments of the odyssey. In relation, especially, to the Second World War, he says: “this agitation and unrest characteristic of our historical age have increased in this last military conflagration and with the post-war difficulties” (CAS, 53). Indeed, the social ills that are considered the causes of war have not been eliminated or overcome with the defeat of fascism. On the contrary, the world has been divided into two blocs, the communist and the so-called democratic. But, more profoundly than by borders between States or between systems, mankind is intimately divided on its basic attitudes.

There are two kinds of social actors that prevail, says Arizmendiarrrieta: the conservatives, on the one hand, people of peace, as is vulgarly but commonly said, who are satisfied with the current state; and the revolutionaries, on the other hand, unhappy with the current situation, particularly with the current distribution of wealth. “It is commonly said that the former always tend to look back and find the foundations of their ideas and the basis of their privileges in history and in past life. The latter look at the present or to the future and demand their rights, the rights that their reason and their consciousness proclaim” (Ib.). This very distinction itself is clear enough to see where Arizmendiarrrieta’s sympathies and preferences lie.

Although not the only one, the central point on which the spirits are divided and the two positions are defined most categorically is that of property (Ib.). This is, therefore, the cardinal point on which the question of the establishment of a more just social order is decided: “A social economic order made to fit man. There currently exists a social economic order, but not made to fit mankind, but rather made to fit the measure imposed by a false concept of property” (Ib. 54).

Two forces are in conflict, and Arizmendiarrrieta makes an effort to define his doctrine as a third way: these are liberalism, or capitalism, which considers the right to property an absolute and sacred natural right, and collectivism, or communism, which considers it unnatural. Arizmendiarrrieta considers property a relative, conditioned and limited natural right; or, as he says, a right of functional character.

8.1 Historical meaning of property

To show the relativity of the concept of property and of its value, Arizmendiarrrieta begins a historical review. The historical origin, he tells us, cannot be determined precisely. The first data we have on property

assumes societies that are already highly developed and organized, with their kings, landowners, slaves, etc. Even societies that are considered primitive or savage have forms of organizing that are relatively advanced, including a certain system of property. Some undergo a slow evolution which would go from a primitive communism towards economic specialization or property. But this thesis, whose main inspiration is a deterministic evolution, cannot be confirmed with sufficient data (Ib. 55-56).

However, Arizmendiarieta follows an outline of historical evolution, according to which, in a primitive civilization in which the population lived in caves and fed on wild fruits, the ownership of houses and lands would be of no interest. Likewise, nomadic societies would not seek lands to own, but rather sites on which to graze their cattle. "Stable ownership or possession is presented linked to the development of forms of sociability," he tells us. "The more culture expands, the more grazing of animals is practiced, and the better provisioned men are with the means of subsistence, the more ownership is sought, and the more the right to it is respected. The more intensive culture becomes, the more individualized property becomes, whether in a person or in a community" (Ib. 56).

Arizmendiarieta distinguishes four stages or phases of evolution: (1) patriarchal property, (2) feudal, (3) manorial and (4) the individualist or "quiritary" [*citizenship-based*] property regime. The idea of a right to property conferred upon the head of a people or tribe comes from the original idea that the head, as such, the patriarch or king, has a right over all the goods of the group. The oldest ancestor concentrates all rights, prerogatives and powers, including property, in his hands. Then the feudal property regime appears, in which property belongs to the lord, and is occupied by the servant, who has to satisfy certain rents in kind or money, and can be replaced by the lord. Later, the manorial, or hereditary lease, regime emerges, in which full ownership of the land is divided into two distinct rights: the right of the owner, which is a sort of mortgage credit, and the right of the landlord, which is like a hereditary usufruct. Finally, the individualist regime is characterized by the division and distribution of the land, each part of which is personal property of an individual, who has the absolute right to enjoy it exclusively, to receive all its fruits, and to dispose of it. In Arizmendiarieta's discussion, these are not four forms of property, but four successive stages (Ib.).

The outline discussed does not include "common property" in a strict sense in any of the four periods, nor prior to them. Indeed, "we cannot say that history offers us an evolution of any kind of common property," says Arizmendiarieta, "in which the soil or the land is a collective good or property of the State, which turns over its enjoyment to private persons, to individual ownership" (Ib. 56-57). Arizmendiarieta believes, rather, that common and private property occur always simultaneously (not successively), both following a varied and simultaneous development, in accordance with the demands of the economy, of coexistence, of the technical progress, and of historical events. At times, one kind has predominated over the other, and within each kind, there have also

been different modalities, according to the conditions of each people or historical age.

Arizmendiarieta does not try to give us a rigorous historical discussion of the evolution of the regime of property. What he is after in his discussion is the relativization of the current forms of property, which are considered “a natural right,” when they are really no more than concrete and variable forms of it. Ownership is recognized as a natural right, but the property regime does not have an immutable character (Ib. 57), and does not offer a unique legitimate concretion (Ib. 59), but rather is, and will continue to be, subjected to transformations. Drawing on Carbonell (Ib. 58-59), Arizmendiarieta illustrates this relative character with a comparison between the principle of authority and that of property. “In the same way that the nature of man demands existence of society without setting the form and conditions of its concrete existence, which are determined by various contingent facts, and just as the nature of political society requires a supreme authority, without establishing or indicating the concrete form or the subject that should embody it—which are fixed by various facts—the nature of man and of the family demands the existence of property, which is also determined and concretized by various circumstances and historical conditions” (Ib. 59). The principle of authority is more fundamental and essential to human social nature than that of property: if the former is, in the end, variable according to the conveniences and historical circumstances, such that the form of authority materializes and transforms ceaselessly through history, the principle of property cannot be said to be any more fixed.

Arizmendiarieta also indicates the ultimate reason for this variability: material goods have no value in themselves, but rather in relation to man. Their essential fate consists of meeting the needs of each and every one, so their legitimacy is subject to the fulfillment of this end and to the measure in which they fulfill it. Let us underscore that the end of material goods is not defined as meeting the needs or demands of their possessor, but the needs “of each and every one” (Ib. 57), with which, if not in a temporary and historical order, then in a moral order, a certain communism or common property is declared as the original order.

8.2 Social meaning of property

If we continue to ask why material goods must be at the service “of each and every one,” rather than of their possessor, Arizmendiarieta brings us to what, for him, constitutes the ultimate foundation of human dignity: God, the creator of man, and creator, likewise, of nature. Nature, indeed, was not created for one man or another, but for man in general, for each and every one.

Among Arizmendiarieta’s arguments in favor of (private) property, those of convenience and those of need can be distinguished. Convenience would be reasons such as: property stimulates work, more production, the best satisfaction of needs; property is the guarantee of social peace, etc. (CAS, 61-62). Need would be those derived more or less directly

from a demand of human nature itself. But even here, it is fitting to distinguish degrees: Judeo-Christian doctrine of the characteristic relationships between man and the universe, at most, expresses that man has the right to provide for his needs to the extent necessary, availing himself for this of the goods that God has created and placed at his disposal in nature. A concrete right to property is not easy to extract from there, though it is always fitting to say that private property is the most natural way to attend to the fair distribution of the goods that nature, created by God for man, offers us (Ib. 62). It could be argued, at most, that certain abusive forms of property, which prevent the worst-off from having access to created and needed material goods, are incompatible with this doctrine. It would, therefore, have a negative and limiting application, more than positive, to the basis of the right to property.

In fact, Arizmendiarieta makes more use of an argument situated on the line between need and convenience, though he formulates it as need: private property is indirectly required in this case by human nature, as an inescapable requirement of individual freedom, “because freedom does not exist there where there exists dependence, dependence on another to eat one’s daily bread, dependence on another to own oneself” (SS, II, 277). In this perspective, property appears as “essential to safeguard freedom and human dignity” (CAS, 95). At the same time, its validity is limited to “the extent to which it safeguards the dignity of the human person, their freedom, their initiative, and serves the development and cultivation of their human values” (Ib. 62).

There is a curious argument in favor of private property from Leo XIII (Ib. 60-61), which Arizmendiarieta has developed in his own way: it is derived from the specific nature of man as an intelligent being. “(...) Keep in mind that for man, gifted with intelligence and capable of foreseeing the needs of tomorrow, and with a heart to feel what is foreseen, these needs are permanent needs, and because of this, he needs a permanent and invariable possession of goods; their use is not enough” (SS, II, 277). Ownership is a requirement of the human gift of foresight.

In summary, an “honest sufficiency of goods” is considered a natural right, as a safeguard of freedom and of the dignity of man (Ib. 276); as a stimulus of work and of initiatives necessary for the realization of the person: “how many talents go to waste, and how many virtues go undeveloped, because often, man does not have the most basic resources that his capacity and his intelligence demand, because he lacks everything, and is obliged to live on a paltry salary” (Ib. 279). The natural right to property, thus understood, “is not that which must benefit holders of large amounts of capital, but rather that with which must benefit all mankind; it is that with which must redeem the proletariat” (Ib. 277).

It is understandable that nearly all of Arizmendiarieta’s reflections on property are oriented towards showing, more than its character as a natural right, the relative nature of property, since the currently dominant concept is considered wrong and false, and at the same time, “taboo” by the antonomasia of our civilization (CAS, 54). “I will not say that the

right to property is negligible, but to be acceptable, it should be defined and reduced to just and natural forms” (Ib.). A long labor of education and change of mentality is required: “Today, by the imposition of the environment in which we have been brought up and educated, we have an internal resistance to receiving the true doctrine on property” (Ib. 55).

Arizmendiarieta summarizes the righteous (Christian) doctrine on property in this way:

1. “In view of pontifical doctrine on private property, we cannot continue conceiving of it as an absolute right, as an end in itself, and as a primary principle of natural law. We must not confuse the right to private property with the right to a sufficiency of material goods to live a decent life. The absolute right is to the sufficiency of these goods, to their use, whose denial is a violation of a primary natural right. The right to private property is nothing more than a derivation of this principle, and is valid as long as it leads to that end (Pontifical Texts of the 1.4.).

The regime of private property that deprives or prevents a large number of men from having the goods needed to lead an honest and dignified life cannot defend itself by invoking a natural right to private property. The Pope says so expressly. Let us remember the condemnation of that social order that publicly denies and practically makes impossible the exercise of the natural and primary right of every man to use the goods of the land. This is how the sentence of St. Augustine is understood, when he said, “the superfluous goods of the rich are necessary goods for the poor. Those who possess superfluous goods possess the goods of others” (Pontifical Texts of the 5.13.).

2. Due to the functional nature of property and the dynamic character of society, no single form of private property fulfills the demands of natural law. On the contrary, a form of property that, under certain conditions, satisfies its function can impede the purpose of property in a different environment. Those who think that there exists something divinely and immutably ordained should remember the phrase of Saint Thomas Aquinas: “Human convention, more than natural law, makes the division of property survive.” Or another from Pius XII: “Every man has ... the natural right and fundamental to the use of material goods ... it being ... up to human will and to the legal form of the people to more precisely regulate practical action.” The institution of private property has to be transformed to the extent necessary to carry out the ends it is assigned” (CAS, 77-79).

8.3 The current property regime

“The right to private property is an undisputed and sacred right. And precisely because it is considered such for some, for a minority, there exists an immense, disinherited and hopeless majority that cannot aspire to have anything” (CAS, 78). Currently, an absolutist concept of the right to property dominates, “in the sense that, whatever it contains or encompasses can be disposed of however one wants, or very nearly.” And any other concept of it hardly enters our minds. “And because it starts from an absolutist concept of property, with no sense of violating our conscience, funds or wealth are used, and are invested, and are administered. Concretely, in our current case, we find that capital, or its representation, could hardly conceive of that which exceeds the limit of a determined

and limited benefit being wealth and money and funds which could be provided to public funds” (SS, II, 310-311).

This concept of property has led to an absurd situation. It is affirmed, on the one hand, that the current system social is based on respect for the right to property. So, if we examine the reality of constitutions and codes of law, all of them consecrate and sanction the principle of private property. “But let us go to our urban centers, and walk among their shops, their industries, their banks, and let us see whose they are. Let us study the social conditions of their debtors, let us review the statistics on the distribution of wealth. And we will see that one of the most dramatic features of our society is the great number of the disinherited, and we will observe that nine tenths of the workers work their whole lives without hope of possessing property, since it is impossible in the economic conditions of current society. The savings they can scrape together are no more than a small reserve in the expectation of a misfortune, or some other unforeseen setback” (CAS, 64).

In our society, work as the origin and source of property has been eliminated. Originally, Arizmendiarieta tells us, it was possible to acquire property in two ways: by occupation and by work. Today, with the concepts of worker and owner divorced, and work degraded, this has been eliminated practically as a means or medium of acquiring property (Ib. 60). “Stable ownership is conceived of as the right of a class, which could achieve it either through conquest and strength, or, normally, through inheritance, purchase, gift, or other similar means. This is how the property regime of our time emerged, a regime that has been guaranteed by a legal structure and which benefits a minority, a privileged group, and which, as we have indicated, has been established by traditions and laws inspired or created more for small interests than by postulates of the common good” (Ib.).

While it can be affirmed, in general, that our society is based on a false concept of the right to property, from the point of view of human relations, two categories of private property should be distinguished, which are no different in their effects. In the first category are goods for use and personal enjoyment, such as a house, furniture, pictures, etc. and goods of ordinary consumption. The possession of these goods does not affect the mutual relationships of individuals or, at most, to a minimal degree, or in a way that does not compromise human dignity, in Arizmendiarieta’s opinion (Ib. 65). This is not the case with the second category of goods, productive goods, which are not limited to personal use: “The ownership of these goods affects human relations very deeply, since, in fact, it establishes relationships of dependence and subordination, dependence or subordination that naturally influence the life of one’s neighbor” (Ib.). It is the possession of these goods in the second category that provokes, when understood wrongly, the extreme reactions that can be summarized in Proudhon’s expression, “property is theft” (Ib. 55). In fact, it requires the immense majority to live perpetually in a state of new slavery, which Arizmendiarieta considers not much better than the old one (SS, I, 126),

or to a perpetual state of being a minor. “Only a few, a very small class, currently enjoys private property broadly enough to feel supported by it. This class squanders money, and as soon as it can, stops providing active services to the community (which is why property is an incentive for laziness). In other times, some workers could feel attracted by the possibility of becoming bosses, but today, this is becoming impossible, because to be able to act with odds of certain success in industry or commerce requires large amounts of capital” (CAS, 64-65).

If property is legitimized by the services it provides, which is to say, as a guarantee of freedom and human dignity, the current property regime not only fails this requirement, but is, itself, the greatest obstacle to its fulfillment. “Current society is based on the fact that the majority of the population can never acquire enough private property to gain broad freedom of action” (Ib. 65). Because of all this, while Proudhon’s phrase that equates property and robbery is not acceptable in its totality, it continues to express a piece of the truth. “It is necessary to remove all the truth it contains,” says Arizmendiarieta, quoting a famous sermon by Ketteler, “for it to one day be a lie.” As long as it contains the smallest bit of truth, it will have enough strength to radically unsettle the order of this world. As deep calls to deep, a crime against nature likewise calls another crime. From the false right to property, communism was born” (Ib. 55).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Iserloh, E.-Stoll, Ch.: *Bischof Ketteler in seinen Schriften*, Matthias-Grünwald, Mainz, 1977, 38.

“The current distribution of goods (...) is in conflict with the most basic postulates of equity and of justice” (SS, II, 295).

8.4 Attitudes toward property

The issue refers, in principle, exclusively to the ownership of productive assets, because of the danger that this private possession implies for human relations. On one occasion, Arizmendiarieta distinguished three basic attitudes (CAS, 66): liberal, collectivist and Church doctrine, but later, he ran into difficulties, especially in distinguishing some forms of “collectivism” from Church doctrine. Without binding ourselves strictly to the above-mentioned scheme, let us look at the various forms that Arizmendiarieta considers in the problem of private ownership of productive assets.

8.4.1 Christian Liberalism

[*Translator’s note: as a reminder, “liberalism” in this book does not refer to progressivism, but classical liberalism, which is to say, rationalism and unfettered capitalism.*]

This is what we will call—Arizmendiarieta speaks of “Christian liberals”—the posture that consists of “holding harmless and unquestionable the right to the possession of the same (production goods), to remove risk through the penetration of Christian ideals or justice in human relations, such that it is overcome through the good will of the individual. The right to property is a sacred right, and applies equally ex-

erted over one kind of goods or another. The right to property is so basic to economic life that it cannot be altered or replaced” (Ib. 66).

Arizmendiarieta recognizes that this attitude was very common among Christians in the nineteenth century, and that, even in the twentieth century, it is turning out to be difficult to put another concept of property in people’s minds. However, Arizmendiarieta judges this attitude to be unacceptable: “The history of social life of the past century, and even of ours, is testimony to what can be achieved for social justice and the conditions of life of the proletarians on the unique and exclusive path of the penetration of ideas” (Ib.).

Generally, Arizmendiarieta expressed himself on liberalism in very harsh terms, considering it the principle cause of all the evils besetting mankind. Beyond his opinions or doctrinal evaluations, his personal experience does not seem to be at all separate from this harshness. More than once in his writings, Arizmendiarieta referred to people who, whenever workers’ rights or a possible property reform is mentioned, put their hands to their heads, are horrified, and call anyone who does so “white communists” and instigators of disorder. “Today, those people are staunch defenders of the right to property, of that ridiculous right, of that right, by all appearances, that is only needed by those who possess everything that want. That right, which they dare to call natural, which they say nature has given to man. That right, which gives them full freedom to have everything they can hoard, but which they tolerate and consent to the rest being denied. That right whose exercise they want impede in others” (SS, II, 295). These expressions must have sounded harsh, coming from a priest and from the pulpit of the locksmithing town, in the postwar years.

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