

9.4.3 Professional teaching

On August 2, 1943, Arizmendiarieta addressed a group of Mondragon businesses leaders with the following words: “Informed of the good disposition of the industrialists of Mondragon for the solution of the problem of professional teaching, and hoping that every idea or initiative leading to such objective will merit a warm reception among you, we take the liberty of addressing you in the name of Catholic Action, which must not and will not remain on the sidelines of this issue, which has such a close relationship to the ends that it pursues” (EP, I, 8). From that day, Arizmendiarieta will find himself in constant need of reconciling private initiative and State action. The experience will not be very positive.

Arizmendiarieta began full of optimism: “Authority,” he says, “as the manager of the common good and principal promoter of public prosperity, has to face this problem today with the same decisiveness and the same breadth with which, in its day, it faced the problem of primary teaching and training” (Ib. 45). There were a time in which primary instruction was not considered a problem of the common good; its solution was then entrusted to private initiative, until it was seen that ignorance and illiteracy were a matter that affected all members of society, affecting their fate so deeply that the State, even when it meant raising public expenses considerably, no had choice but to attack the evil at its root. Primary instruction became mandatory and, so that no one could be excused, it was made free. Today, he says, no one sees public expenses earmarked for the establishment of primary teaching as debatable. It is a social service that benefits all of society.

The same should occur at once with those children or youth who are abandoned to their luck upon leaving primary school at fourteen years old (Ib. 44), with society providing them nothing that they could use to undertake an activity or a job in accordance with their skills, and not imposed by mere economic circumstances. In addition, there is the aggravation that in this society in which we live, the more social groups need outside protection, the less it provides to them, because of their social position. There exist universities, institutes and all kinds of centers maintained by funds from the public treasury, which benefit those who have the least need for outside protection. “The concession of opportunities for instruction and training in accordance with the skills and will of stakeholders is, today, an elemental postulate of good government, and is an indispensable government rule to satisfy the longing for justice and equity that sprouts in all hearts, and, on the other hand, will be a highly effective measure for stability and social co-existence” (Ib. 46).

Indeed, apart from the generous help of the people of Mondragon (Ib. 56-58), they did not lack for help from public entities, especially of the Dep-

utation of Guipuzcoa, Caja de Ahorros Provincial, Banco Guipuzcoano, and the Official Chamber of Industry. But even with all this, “we would by lying if we said that all the requests and gestures have had results. But the lack of response to some of our requests, we believe, will be the silence of a waiting period. Ensnared in a densely populated and heavy-tax-paying area, but one which lacks in any post-school training center and has no affordable access to any other, our school provides a public teaching service, just as an official center could provide, and as we have corrected this defect, we hoped for an official assignment by the National Ministry of Education among the volume of those received by other centers of type. We believed the non-existence of another post-school teaching center in a zone in which its need is recognized, would earn us special attention. Needless to say, we were surprised to be given a concession of 2,000 pesetas” (Ib. 58-59; statistics from 1947). This grant arrived, it seems, through the Delegation of Unions. “We have all heard,” replies Arizmendiarieta, “of union dues which, just in the city of Mondragon, currently adds up to more than five hundred fifty thousand pesetas annually. Add to that what is paid in Arechavaleta and Escoriaza, which is the sponsor zone of our School” (Ib.).

Years would go by, and things would not improve much. 1951: “Can we say that the National Ministry of Education has given the slightest attention to these centers and these institutions (professional training centers)? Undoubtedly, the attention the Ministry provides to them is not at the level they deserve. In spite of their enormous multiplication and development, budget appropriations of the Ministry for these centers continue almost unchanged throughout these years. The first form of protection of the apprentices should imply broader and more decisive policy support by the Ministry for these Centers, which are, in the immense majority, private” (Ib. 236). Arizmendiarieta accuses the “policy of statification” of teaching, which leads to apprentices quitting school and private professional training centers, as he indicates in his article, in most cases. The State prefers to build other kinds of teaching centers, especially at the intermediate level. “And now these institutes are an excuse to stop providing economic means to other centers, to subsidize existing private ones, that meet a public function. Likewise, workers and sons of workers are the ones that attend union schools and others run by other institutions” (Ib. 238).

“The Christian policy is not what is labeled that way,” Arizmendiarieta concludes bitterly, “but rather that which recognizes, and is inspired by, those other undisputed principles from the point of view of a Christian conception of administration and government” (Ib.).

In subsequent years, the critical observations multiply. In 1968, in parallel with other aspects, criticism on this topic becomes more widespread and extends to the lack of general consciousness that is observed in all of

society. “By this time, there must be others, not just us, who are addressing these matters of social emancipation through professional training, both in businesses in which we work, and therefore, more or less bound to hear the demands of our needs, and in union or mutualist organizations, to which we are subscribed by payments, and for which we designate leaders, and which see fit to include among their social objectives some of these aspirations and their coverage. We think our social body has reached the age of majority, and must at least have reached an awareness of the problems that most deeply condition our future, and therefore, it is high time that in the negotiation of collective agreements, these kind of matters be an object of attention; that in the governance of social institutions, union members or mutualists give a fine-tuned expression to the sense of equity and of distributive justice in the administration of social funds; that in our organizations born to correct family powerlessness in various kinds of matters, the need to proactively address unquestionable needs in the far-off future gains resonance” (Ib. 77). What is demanded, then, is an awareness of the problem among all of society, starting with the government and unions, including businesspeople, and reaching the workers themselves, who should include this kind of demand in negotiations of collective agreements.

“We must loyally recognize that we are still far from that awareness existing, or the resulting advocacy action, and it is due to this, perhaps in no small part, that this extraordinary tool of promotion, the professional training center, is still acting with a coefficient of performance that could be notably improved, because of the limitation of affordable material resources” (Ib.).

Arizmendiarieta’s complaints go on and on. Let us limit ourselves to the concrete problem of teachers, which, more than a problem, is a culmination of them. Professional industrial training centers cannot, in the first place, have an exclusively dedicated professorship, but rather, must make constant use of assistants, because of schedules, etc., and, above all, of remuneration (Ib. 281). And this problem is difficult to solve, as long as its solution is entrusted to the Central Board of Professional Industrial Training, which is part of the Ministry of National Education. “If we adjust to what they pay upper-level teaching staff or public functionaries with skills and responsibilities analogous or superior to the teachers at the professional industrial training centers, we will have that to conclude that, practically speaking, what we intend is not possible” (Ib. 283). On the other hand, professional industrial teachers are constantly asked for by businesses. “At this time, there is no school of professional industrial training in Guipuzcoa that has the staff and degrees required by the Law” (Ib. 284).

“The only viable solution is administrative autonomy,” decides Arizmendiarieta. This is likewise imposed by regional differences. “We believe

today that budgetary resources are not sufficient for current arrangements, nor is the current administrative structure adequate for agile management, which is demanded by the widely varied characteristics of the regions of Spain. To adjust to the circumstances requires a greater decentralization, with the incorporation or representation of various sectors involved in the solution to this problem, with the consequent economic contribution provided for their needs” (Ib. 309), he writes in 1962.

“In the current line of conduct of regulation and ordering, things are proceeding as if all Spain, for this purpose, had identical characteristic circumstances,” accuses Arizmendiarieta in relation to possible economic formulas to sustain professional industrial teaching. Besides the inadequacies that this policy has in itself, a fatal consequence was the loss of citizen consciousness, such that the initiatives that the State could undertake (1958) could no longer have a very enthusiastic collaboration of the living forces most directly interested. “It has been revealed that municipalities and Deputies have intervened in this field, as the one who are most sensitive to the most urgent problems of each zone or place; businesses have been taxed without incentive or attention to those who would have done something, or a lot, in this field, since three years after passing a Law, which anticipated exemptions or reductions in response to the efforts made, they have been given no satisfaction, few as they were; it is known that the payment is of a certain amount, but the exact amount is unknown and, above all, its use and destination; some Provincial Boards have been created, but with no authority or administrative autonomy, relegated to a simple bureaucratic or procedural function; we would say, in summary, that for as grave as this problem is, citizen consciousness about it has been diluted” (EP, I, 250).

The aid received never seemed to be enough. Finally, Arizmendiarieta again turned to help from the community, from the interested parties themselves, from the businesses. Guipuzcoa, he says, has a network of professional training centers covering all of its territory, of all existing legal classifications: official centers, Church centers, union centers, free centers, company centers, and subsidiaries of cultural institutions. Almost all are deficient, both in relation to facilities and machinery, and in relation to the faculty. “Until there is an administrative decentralization, or the centers adopt the relevant measures, to assure continuity of good personnel, it will be difficult to fix this problem of personnel. Given the scope represented by both the costs of installation and maintenance of this mode of teaching, it is estimated that it will be difficult to maintain it at the level of demand without a wide economic and social participation by the whole population, which is to say, we will be interested in collaboration by businesses, workers, and various public and private institutions, so that, in this field, we not only sustain schools, but complete their action through an agile system of social credit to youth with skills to pursue training at higher levels, or that takes

an interest in training them in specialized centers, whether national or foreign” (Ib. 318).

9.5 The State and development of the cooperative movement

While, in the origin of the cooperative movement, it is necessary to recognize the decisive role of the Professional School, the criticisms of the deficiencies of the State on the topic of professional teaching could be repeated about the development of the cooperative movement. Arizmendiarieta did so on one occasion: “Around here, the members of the Obra Sindical de Cooperación are conspicuous in their absence, to the point where if it depended on their action, at this point, in all this region, there would not be a single producer cooperative” (EP, I, 295). The criticisms of the administration, considered bureaucratic, or of “sectors of a feudal nature, that have influence on the administration” (CLP, I, 26), are not lacking, either, concerning the problems and difficulties that hamper the cooperative movement.

However, on this point, it would be good to limit ourselves to criticism of a new kind: the criticism of legislation itself.

“To affirm that the first detractor of the Cooperative is the Law itself,” he wrote in 1970, “for the defective image that it provokes of the Cooperative as enterprise, and for the absence of mechanisms provided to give a future to the strength and vitality of the base, is not to make any kind of negative criticism” (FC, III, 295). For an effective and healthy advocacy of cooperatives, no less than laws, other factors count, like mental preparation and personal and collective awareness with respect to solidarity, the function of property, the common good, etc. “But the Law itself should be a pedagogue on this, and the image that it calls up in us of a cooperative business has to be clear, without error, and with well-defined commitments” (Ib. 296).

If the starting point is the principle of pluralism in forms of business organization in the field of economics, the cooperative option does not need to be identified with exclusive and excluding relationships, imposing on those who opt for it the inability to exercise other options of relationship and coexistence, as if any alliance had to be fatal or inviable for these other options. “Today, those who contemplate the economic world with a democratic and social vision, and not necessarily totalitarian or rigidly corporate, must conceive of economic entities with open options for relationship and interaction” (Ib.).

“The legislator must foresee and provide ordinary means so that cooperative entities do not live in perpetual age of minority, which is to say, they should make use of themselves, of their organization, to acquire the vigor needed to bring their commitments to a happy resolution” (Ib.). Legislation

on cooperatives needs to be updated, concludes Arizmendiarieta.

Arizmendiarieta has been repeating this demand for years. In 1969, lamenting the grave defects of the legislative and organizational creation (“it lacks provisions to channel a cooperative movement under the impulse and risk of its initiative and vitality”), he insisted: “a new Cooperatives Law is needed” (CLP, III, 177). And in 1968, he demanded the reform of the cooperative fiscal regime: “The need for reform in this field is unavoidable if we consider the profound transformation that economic reality has suffered in these recent years, which leaves the current rules totally outdated, which, in their day, were issued for a radically different economic panorama” (FC, III, 110).

It seems that cooperatives had numerous difficulties with the current legislation right from the first moment they appeared. Cooperators’ ideal of building an organization that, on the one hand, constitutes a really human community and, on the other hand, satisfies the demands of a progressive and dynamic company, “assumed more than a little reflection and study, to be able to fit such presuppositions into our cooperative legislation, which was deemed essential for the future development of the community experience. Impediments to this that the aforementioned provisions cooperatives seemed to be, at least in the common interpretation of them, overlook the way that one man, *don* José Luis del Arco, Chief of Legal Advice of the Sindical de Cooperación, took charge of the spirit that encouraged the leaders of this Cooperative Experience” (CLP, III, 173). Whenever Arizmendiarieta narrated the history of the cooperative movement, he gratefully recalled this man, Del Arco, “who knew to how value what is fundamental and permanent” (Ib. 226), “no less sensitive and concerned for the spirit than for the letter of the Law” (Ib. 184), always “most attentive to the spirit, without contempt for the letter” (Ib. 234).

9.6 The State and political-economic structures

Occasional criticism of Spanish economic policy is not lacking in Arizmendiarieta’s writings, like this one, arising around the water supply program of the Metropolitan Area of Madrid: “Some people clamor that the Peninsula is being desertified, and the countryside is dying of thirst. But while some howl and clamor, it looks like other are investing and progressing to maintain the capital in the foreground among analogous cities in Europe or in the world. Everything is a question of scale and interests, in which some keep saving so that others can enjoy, some working so there can be others who can walk through avenues that are more luminous and splendid every day. It is a matter of good taste and manners; of the power of each of us” (FC, IV, 236).

He uses sharper relief in his severe criticism of the Third Development

Plan (1971), which he considers “more of an exercise in guessing, attentive to the political results of the increase in well-being, than an authentic effort to plan reality, which, at any rate, it only controls only a small part of, abiding by programming when it is time to solidify a timely and appropriate policy” (FC, IV, 56). Rather than a solution, Arizmendiarieta sees the Plan as a mass of commitments that will lead to nothing. “It goes on without coming down from the limbo of pure principles, development is pursued not thanks to the modification of the guidelines of the economy, but rather in spite of them, which is to say, without debating them and without undertaking, therefore, their transformation” (ib.). This is a plan, he says, that is short-sighted and will be short-lived, presented in beautiful lacing, but pure fiction.

Those who knew him closely testify that, contrary to what happened in his last years, Arizmendiarieta was adopting positions that were more and more radical and revolutionary. The objective of the classless society became, for him, an obsessive idea, and he did not hide his sympathy for some revolutionary transformations of society (Cuba, etc.). On the other hand, there is no doubt that his early trust in the good disposition and capacity of various social groups or bodies (employers, unions, parties, etc.), to transform society from within, had suffered a serious break in the experience. Convinced of the need for a new order, in spite of everything, Arizmendiarieta must have wondered about what possible subject was capable of carrying out the necessary transformation. There exist oral testimonies about all that, but not written, which is why this study prefers leave to these aspects for his biographers. There is, however, in Arizmendiarieta’s writings (1970) a critical reflection on Spanish political-economic structure, that belongs, without a doubt, to this context. In it, Arizmendiarieta demands a deep reform of structures, not limited to immediate economic policies, since “the key to our problems lies in our economic structures and (...), therefore, it is appropriate to reform them” (FC, III, 290). How? It would first be necessary, he says, to transform the role that the State plays in the economy: “from a mere role of oversight, regulator, compensator of the deficiencies and disabilities of private initiative, to an role of being active and co-active, controller and organizer, a true leader, and not merely a subsidiary” (ib. 290-291).

In Arizmendiarieta’s general thought, this text remains isolated. Anyway, he clearly recognizes that the State has a decisive role to play in social transformation.

Logically, it is first necessary to accept the need to transform the State itself, so that it can then fulfill its transformative function. And that is what Arizmendiarieta does on this occasion: “But, as always, the key to the question (...) is fundamentally political and would previously suppose

modifications of the current reactionary and passive character, turned over to the almighty initiative of a small oligarchy of the State” (Ib. 291).

For the construction of the new order to which Arizmendiarieta aspires, cooperation will not be the only means, but rather one means among several. All society must commit to it—all people of good will—struggling in on many fronts and with the most diverse means, including political struggle and the transforming intervention of the State. However, this may constitute a notable deficiency in Arizmendiarieta’s thought; he himself has not reflected much on these aspects, focusing all his attention in the need to organize citizen initiative and cooperation. It should not be expected, he will insist, that the State will intervene: it is necessary to organize and act from bottom up. He considers that citizens leaving transformative functions in the hands of the state constitutes one of the greatest obstacles to the real transformation of society. So, from his personal perspective, the State will be more an obstacle and a hindrance than an instrument to count on.

10. Need for a new order

Arizmendiarieta is convinced—in his early years, to which we primarily refer in this chapter—that it is necessary to find an entirely new social order, on a new base, given that the fundamentals of both liberalism and collectivism have failed. The root of this failure, in Arizmendiarieta’s opinion, lies in the insufficient recognition of human dignity on the part of both ideologies. He does not see, for the moment, another possible basis for fraternity and universal solidarity than the Christian message.

10.1 The revolution of Jesus of Nazareth

To recognize God in Jesus Christ, or believe in the God of Jesus Christ, is to recognize the incomparable dignity of mankind, as a child of God, and confess the universal fraternity of all people, children of the same Father, breaking all barriers of nation, race or class. The revolution of Jesus Christ is the revolution of fraternity, of charity, which is fundamental to and complements the practice of social justice.

With the first European war over, mankind expected long years of peace and prosperity.

Again, writes Arizmendiarieta, mankind forgot the horrors of war, and “the dizzying progress of technology presaged for many the definitive triumph of human intelligence and reason, and so, once again, rationalism is on the rise” (SS, I, 162). Food stocks had grown to a degree such that, little later, Australians will throw millions of rams into the sea, Argentines will burn their wheat, and Brazilians their coffee. For a moment, it seemed possible to transform the world into a paradise (Ib.).

Before long, it could be seen that all efforts were useless, powerless to assure peace. Neither Wilson's fourteen points, nor the Versailles Pact could guarantee peace. Political war was followed by social war, encouraged by hatred and class enmities. "Distanced from God, rulers believed they could arrange this mad world concealed from divine law, and their efforts turned out to be children's games. The world needs a ruler and a code; and that ruler, regardless of who does not like it, is Christ, and his Law, the universal code" (SS, I, 152).

After the Second World War, continues Arizmendiarieta, instead of the optimistic euphoria felt after the first, a profound pessimism has spread, and more than pessimism, a radical skepticism, a climate in which the only thing that is saved and thrives is personal selfishness, such that we do not want know anything about anything, except life itself and existence, the basis and foundation of the philosophical system that is all the rage these days, replacing rationalism (Ib. 163). Once more, man is abandoned to his fate, in need of rediscovering the person and work of Jesus Christ.

With respect to the person of the historical Jesus, Arizmendiarieta observes a change of attitude among Western intellectuals and wise people since the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, which is beginning to reach the masses, incorporating itself into opinion trends, into the struggles of parties and classes. Today, he says, all social factions seek to appropriate the figure of Jesus: so it is not strange hear in our days that Jesus was a revolutionary, socialist, communist... (Ib. 9).

In this time of social struggles, "it is partly true to say that Christ was a revolutionary," recognizes Arizmendiarieta (Ib. 9). He undoubtedly caused a radical social transformation, and began a completely new order.

In the pre-Christian, pagan world, a father could put his children to death on a whim. The pagan world did not know social assistance in the form of orphanages, asylums, or hospitals. The pagan lord could have slaves flung in his pools for the simple pleasure of seeing them drown and be fish food. Might made right (Ib. 9). For the mere fact of having put an end to this state of things, Christ can be considered a revolutionary, though certainly not for the way he acted to put an end to all that, because he did it by instilling love, mutual respect and submission to authority. "Christ, the prototype of the new man, wanted to transform the ancient world; but he did not propose do it with violence, but rather by changing it on the inside, by transforming the spirit of man. The doctrine of Christ is not dynamite that devastates, but rather, yeast that ferments and quickens." Using the words of an unnamed author—as Arizmendiarieta very frequently did—he says: "Christ was a revolutionary the way a springtime ray of sun might be, as it makes vigorous life bloom from the deathly breast of wintry nature" (Ib.).

Others, he continues, regard Christ as a Communist, and the early Christian community as an advocate of collectivism, as the first Communist society. In the same way, they present the gospel as the fundamental and initial constitution of a new social order, presaged by the current one, of the collectivization of everything, the diametric opposite of the existing order in the Roman Empire, whose fundamental concept of private property—right to use and abuse—neither Christ nor the early community could accept.

Arizmendiarieta again responds similarly to the previous point (revolutionary Christ): “Christ was a communist, if ‘communist’ is understood as ‘divide your bread with the hungry, and welcome the poor and homeless into your house,’ or if it commands whoever has two coats to give one to a neighbor who has none... But he did not tell us to take coats from others, or that we could enter another’s house and steal bread..., rather, he sanctioned the natural precept of not violating others’ rights” (Ib. 10-11).

The novelty or specific contribution of Jesus consists, above all, in his concept of God the Father. This is an aspect that we do not need to pause on; instead, it will be helpful to highlight what Arizmendiarieta directly derived from it: the dignity of man, body and soul, constituted in a child of God (Ib., 108 ff.). This is the point that transforms the existing social and political order, the basis of the new social order that, little by little, will be able to be imposed on the old world. This doctrine constitutes, in Arizmendiarieta’s opinion, “the spiritual basis for the greatest revolution history has seen” (Ib. 109). Arizmendiarieta understands the establishment of a just social order as the establishment the kingdom of Christ. And the reign of Christ begins in the heart (Ib. 60 ff).

Today, it is urgent to remember the dignity of man, because “never has there been so much talk of freedom as there has been so far this century, and we have brought forth systems and theories that are the denial of every freedom; never have human value and dignity been spoken of as much as in these recent times and yet, never has there been so little respect or esteem than today for man, who was sacrificed with the greatest ease, whose life is looked down on as the vilest thing; never has there been so much talk as in these last years about mankind, about the common good, about class interests, about the good of mankind—so much absurdity has been justified with these pompous names—and we have reached a social situation in which never have whim and ambition, pride and arrogance, selfishness and cruelty of the strong been more the order of the day, to detriment of the true interests of the masses, of men, of mankind. That is what we have come to” (Ib. 113).

This being the situation, it is no wonder that everywhere voices rise to demand, or to promise, a new social order. However, history is the teacher of life, and we can be sure that the promised “new orders” will solve noth-

ing, if they are not inspired by the gospel. The required new order cannot come from the ideologies that are dominant today.

Indeed, if we cast a quick glance at the history of the ideas and systems that have succeeded each other in Europe over the last hundred years, we see that “we have gone from corrosive individualism to degrading collectivism” (ib. 113).

The prophets of freedom, proclaiming that man is just another force in the universe and that, like all things, finds his balance by being left to his fate, being left to develop his freedom and to operate freely, end up condemning the weak to death, “because they are not allowed to defend their rights by finding support in society, in forming groups, while the strong, the powerful, continue exploiting their freedom at the expense of the former” (ib.). This is how class division is accentuated.

The liberal economic regime, in Arizmendiarieta’s judgment, has allowed the rich to increase their wealth in the same measure that the poor increase their misery. This is how mankind is divided into two opposed worlds, the world of capitalists, and the world of the poor, who are ever more poor, the victims of every kind of injustice, who, moved by the instinct of preservation, find no other way to fight in their own defense than association. Day by day, the division becomes deeper, and the struggle becomes harder, a struggle that not infrequently takes on a violent character. We, ourselves, Arizmendiarieta remembers, have seen revolutions and revolts of this character.

As a consequence of the awakening of the oppressed human consciousness, which has found support in groups and in association for the struggle, the spirit of solidarity has developed strongly, giving way to collectivist ideologies. These consider man not as an independent whole, but rather as a part that finds its necessary essential complement in association, outside of which it has no value and does not represent anything. Man is not valued as an absolute and universal value, but rather on the basis of being a part, on the basis of the utility he can provide to the State or to production. He himself is no longer the subject of his own rights, but rather the object of the rights held for him and over him by an anonymous entity called the State, which may intrude unscrupulously into human lives, even into the consciences of citizens, and reaching the extreme of impeding man from the exercise of unrefuseable and inalienable functions and rights he has as a man (“like it does when meddles in the name of the family or of marriage”) (ib. 114). This is Arizmendiarieta’s vision.

Examining dominant ideologies and systems, “we must confess that man remains an unknown value” (ib. 115). It is urgent, then, rediscover the dignity of man, as made manifest in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

10.2 People of good will

The most tenacious opposition the Church has found to the fulfillment of its mission on Earth has not come from its enemies, but rather has come from Catholics themselves, who are remiss when it comes time to fulfill the social norms given by the Roman Pontiffs. More than Masonic sects, what has hurt the Church is the mute opposition there has been to the application of the principles of justice and equity. “The internal enemies are the ones that, like microbes, destroy life and bring death to the living body” (Ib. 191).

Today there is a clamor for the unity of conservative forces against the forces of revolution. “The unity of conservative forces,” Arizmendiarieta comments, “is needed, not to contain a danger, but rather to create a new world, a more just, more equitable world, and the crusade that our Roman Pontiffs propose in these times is that which must culminate, not in fiery contention, but rather in the building, in the creation, of a more just, more equitable world” (Ib.).

From the beginning, the new order to build demands the participation of everyone. For this reason, it must begin with a serious awareness of Christian obligations. Our task of universal reorganization will end up failing unless each one manages to escape that moral and spiritual lethargy, that apathy and even passivity in which we find ourselves, abandoned to an incomprehensible fatalism (Ib. 201). Arizmendiarieta considers this attitude the consequence of collectivist ideologies and systems, that, he says, inspired by a pessimistic philosophy of mankind, which is considered incapable of intervening in life with all the weight of its personality, have judged that responsibilities should fall to a small minority, that can and should direct and control the masses. He writes in 1945, following the Christmas message of the Pope on democracy, that it is urgent to be free of those infections. “The most urgent task of this time, or in this instant, in which we find ourselves at the beginning of a new era, of a new order in which the will of a few is not going to be imposed, but rather, the will of the many is going to be respected one way or another, I repeat, the most urgent task is that of awakening the awareness of each one, and above all, the sense of responsibility of each individual” (Ib. 201).

To the objection that it is too late to preach, Arizmendiarieta has responded in various ways, since he is confronted over and over with this objection (cf. Ib. 200, 217, 291 ff., 294 ff.). If the Church’s social doctrine has had little effect to date, it has been because of the indifference of Christians, will be the most general answer. “Barbarism, impiety, brutality, and force, have triumphed for no other reason than our negligence and neglect, and have triumphed and have won and defeated only the Christianity of varnish, and of ritual. Now we have to find out if is capable of dominating and tri-

umphing over true Christianity, Christianity of the Ten Commandments, of the social encyclicals” (Ib. 218). “The gospel has not lost efficacy because many centuries have passed since it was revealed to men. If it has not given the sought-after fruit, it is not due to its age, but rather to the malice of men who have been able to excuse themselves from complete fulfillment” (PR, I, 200).¹

Christianity is a religion of action, and of condemnation of the status quo, of conservatism, of accomplished facts; it is the disturbance of the satisfied. However, Christians easily forget the whole “uncomfortable” aspect of the Gospel, preferring a Christianity “that is no longer the religion of Christ” (SS, I, 158).

In order to build the desired new world, Arizmendiarieta places an exceedingly high value on the idea, in this case truth, that must be the basis of that order. Correspondingly, he will give utmost importance to the formation of consciences, to education. Today, he says, there are no truths, there are only opinions. So, rather than men, we have reeds that sway when the wind blows, any wind of doctrine or novelty (SS, II, 252).

Who today has a thirst for the truth, anxiety to possess it, concern to have it, who suffers because of the lack of truth?

We understand that there can be suffering because of a lack of bread, because of the lack of wealth, because of the lack of health, because of the lack of love, because of the lack of certain satisfactions ... Because of the truth?

Today we are passionate about sports, about politics, about art. Today, there is conversation about all this, but what is the truth or error, hardly anyone worries about that, such things are too Platonic.

The saddest symptom is not professing the error itself, because if the error is professed with interest, with zeal, it would be fitting to expect something. The saddest thing is for the truth not to matter to us, to consider it a luxury item or a trifle.

And so, today, we settle for opinions. It is the most man can aspire to or reach.

With only opinions, nothing can be built, nothing can be raised. It is all one can do to maintain one’s balance, like someone who stands on a sphere and so, has no stability. The column of truth is missing, and the stability the truth and conviction give.

This is how, fatally, a civilization, an order that lacks the firm possession of the truth, is doomed to its ruin, and necessarily must disappear.

This is the sign of our times (SS, I,160-161).²

“We lack men of convictions,” he exclaims before Catholic Action youth (1950), “and convictions are a conquest that must be made, not something that is accomplished through a simple and superficial learning about the issues, about truths” (SS, II, 252). According to what can be inferred from

¹ Arizmendiarieta uses this paradoxical argument on several occasions: pontifical social doctrine has not lost validity (1), the revolution of Jesus of Nazareth is possible and necessary (2), the cooperative system has not lost strength (3)... precisely because of the negative experience its failure (non-utilization, lack of attention) would mean in the history. It is the classic kind of apologetic argumentation, not without a certain sophistry, that we find formulated already in Demosthenes, *First Phillipic*: “The judgment of the past should be the source of our hopes for the future. If you had perfectly fulfilled your duty, and yet public affairs were not in better condition, it would no longer be fitting to expect a better future for them. But since, today, affairs are not in their bad state because of the strength of the things themselves, but rather because of your negligence, it is to be expected that, separated from your errors, with your minds amended, they will again take on a much more flourishing aspect.”

his writings, Arizmendiarieta gave utmost importance to the study sessions that he himself organized in the Parish for boys and girls, to “form men with consciousness of their dignity and of their responsibility, men that know what their position is in the world and their destiny in life” (Ib. 259). This is the only way for people to avoid being diluted in the masses like drops in the ocean, he will underscore (Ib. 260).

The presuppositions of a new order cannot be limited to teaching of the truth. “Doctrine that is not put into work, convictions that are not translated into acts, are something as abnormal as life that does not beat, movement that does not vibrate. We are not placed in the world to contemplate or regret, but rather to transform” (Ib. 252). The Church has long suffered the disjunction of doctrine and praxis, which is to say, as Arizmendiarieta rather oddly puts it, it is left with Jesus Christ without his gospel. “For me, it is not the same thing to believe in Jesus Christ with relative facility—as we came to believe in his divinity—as it is to believe in the Gospel” (Ib. 265). Because to believe in the gospel is to believe in life; to believe in life is to hold to its fundamental law, which is to transform, progress, renew (Ib. 266).

And who must be the ones who, over a world that lies in ruins, will raise the new order? After having insisted on the need for God, for the Gospel, for the Church, Arizmendiarieta surprises us a bit with his response: the builders of the new order must be all men of good will. This is not a different way of indirectly naming Christians. He leaves that quite clear by judging that, perhaps, the communists, for example, are interpreting the gospel better than not a few Christians: they carry forward a flag that symbolizes many truths that we Christians have stopped practicing. “If an angel from far-off heaven heard the echo of evangelical preaching, the echo of that magnificent Sermon on the Mount, and came to Earth and wanted to discern who are the ones that have heard Christ, perhaps he would find that, no less than in the ranks and armies of Christian uniforms, there are individuals and people who feel those things among the enemies, among those forces of violence and barbarism” (Ib. 244). Comparing the Church with the people the Old Testament, Arizmendiarieta says that just as because the infidelity of the Jewish people, God chose another people as his instrument, He can now do the same thing: God will lose nothing because we Christians we do not want put the principles entrusted by Him into practice. There will be those who do it, “communists, or socialists, or fascists” (Ib. 272). “And it may be that, as the Gentiles of that time received the inheritance of Christ and were the ones who took the kingdom of Christ to the farthest points, so it may also be others, whom we conceive of as Gentiles and pagans, who really defend the postulates and doctrine of Christ, of the Pope, if not on all points, then at least on many. So, many of the things that we Christians should have done before anyone else, have been done before us, or in greater proportions, and with more generosity, by the

² This insistence on the truth as the foundation of the just social order, as opposed to mere opinion, the cause of instability and decadence, that in the end, does nothing but reproduce well-known Platonic doctrines (cf. Popper, K.R., *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde*, Francke, Bern 1957, vol. I), reminds us once more of the classical humanist training received by Arizmendiarieta in the Seminary. The classical source of Arizmendiarieta’s thought, especially various traditional Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, is easily perceptible. Over time, his own concerns will gradually lead him away from those roots. Arizmendiarieta polemicalizes, as we have seen above and we will again find, with classical social philosophy (“by nature,” writes Aristotle, *Polit.*, I, c.2, “the city is prior to the house and to each of us, since the set is necessarily previous to the part”), or with the conception of man and of work in the society of Greek philosophy. Later, he will also abandon the Platonism of the transcendent truth that is fundamental to the social order, considering the honest search for justice a sufficient basis. However, in this first chapter concerning the starting point of Arizmendiarieta’s thought, what should stand out is his classical humanist training, on the one hand, and his traditional religious education, on the other. It is also necessary to confess that these influences become obvious first and foremost in his pastoral writing from the early years, while his social thought, which is the field where Arizmendiarieta develops his own path, starting in approximately 1950, and which will draw on influences that are quite different from modern philosophy, without ever ceasing to be a “classicalist” in his own way, due to the training he received. However, the recourse to illustrative examples or historical texts and Greco-Roman literature, which are very frequent in his first writings, disappears entirely in later writing.

so-called communists or socialists and extremists. And the strange thing today is that we find much more Christian doctrine in those parties and in those groups whom we reject as enemies of Christ and of Christianity than in many party platforms and groups that are called Catholic and labeled Catholic” (Ib. 271). It cannot be denied that true courage is needed to talk in these terms from the pulpit, in Mondragon, in September of 1944.

As for the configuration of the new order to constitute, Arizmendiarieta expressed himself in general terms most of the time: it shall be a kingdom of justice, of peace, etc.; it must be based on the Church’s social doctrine. In a text from 1944, he left us this concrete image: “The first slogan, the first objective of this new crusade that all humanity must undertake, is the redemption of the proletariat. The two pillars on which that new social order and human co-existence must rest are: an honest sufficiency of goods for all families, and the liberation of mankind, in the future, from all war” (Ib. 275).

1945, D. José María and three companions of his in the sanctuary of Aránzazu. *image currently unavailable*

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