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EDVARD KOCBEK: A Reflection on Spain

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About the author

Edvard Kocbek (1904, Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici–1981, Ljubljana) was a distinguished poet, storyteller, essayist, diarist, translator, and politician. He is well-known for his views on Christian socialism and the active role he played in the Slovenian Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) during the Second World War, as well as in postwar, socialist Yugoslavia.

He was born in 1904, in the village of Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici, where he grew up with two brothers and a sister in the family of a church organist and a housewife. After having finished six grades in his hometown, he went to the classical gymnasium in Maribor, then an important center for Catholic youth. Kocbek's first significant influences can be located at that time. He was active in the youth group led by the Christian socialist Janez Evangelist Krek. In the 1920s, he participated in the *križarstvo* (lit. 'crusader') movement; he published his first articles in major Slovenian newspapers and magazines. Kocbek belongs to the first generation of Slovenian students who completed their high school education in

their native language. With the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—which brought a new liveliness to cultural life—there emerged also a general atmosphere of change and crisis. In this context, the modest, withdrawn, and contemplative Kocbek decided to study theology at the Maribor seminary in 1925. Yet, after two years, he suddenly left the seminary and switched to studies in Romance languages in Ljubljana. Particularly relevant for his intellectual development were experiences and influences he gained during his longer stays and studies abroad: in Berlin in the academic year 1928/29, as well as in Lyon, Dijon, and Paris in 1931/32. After working as a teacher of French language in Bjelovar and Varaždin between 1931 and 1936, he received a teaching post in Ljubljana, returning to a place of particular importance to him.

In the mid-1930s, Edvard Kocbek was still a relatively unknown but gifted poet. His first collection of poems, entitled *Zemlja* (The Earth, 1934), received considerable critical attention. Firmly attached to its intellectual milieu, he regularly collaborated with the new series of the Catholic magazine *Dom in svet* (Home and the World, since 1929), where he published not only his poems and prose but also essays on French literature. His intellectual profile was thus gradually shaped in this period. As Kocbek later reminisced, he had three different fields of activity: literary, Christian-theological, and cultural-political.[1] It was within the third, cultural-political sphere, that he would become one of the central figures of the Slovenian Christian socialists in the second half of the 1930s. His stance concerning the question of the Spanish Civil War contributed to this in a decisive way. Amid the anti-fascist climate of the Popular Front, the events in Spain served as a political and moral catalyst, prompting Kocbek to take a more active political stance and drawing him closer to the Yugoslav communists and the idea of revolution in Yugoslavia. However, in the actions of this young left-wing Catholic, one can also discern elements of existentialist poetics, rooted in a philosophy of freedom and responsibility, authentic life and constant rebellion, which shaped the intricate interplay between this intellectual's engagement with politics, literature, and history.[2] These influences would become evident both in his confrontations within the Catholic camp and in his later divergences with the postwar Yugoslav communist regime.

Kocbek's political emancipation from the Catholic camp unfolded in the late 1930s, initially with the publishing of his magazine *Dejanje* (Action, 1938–1941), and subsequently with his prominent role in the Second World War, as member of the Executive Committee and one of the vice-presidents of the

1 See *Krogi navznoter, krogi navzven: Kocbekov zbornik*. (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2004), 326. Cf. Andrej Inkret, *In stoletje bo zardelo. Kocbek, življenje in delo* (Ljubljana: Modrijan 2011), 101.

2 Marija Mitrović, "Istorija i individualna sudbina," in Edvard Kocbek, *Svedočanstvo: dnevnički zapisi od 3. maja do 2. decembra 1943* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga 1988), 5–10.

Liberation Front. After 1945, Kocbek held the position of Minister for Slovenia in the Federal Government and was the vice-president of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. In 1951, however, Kocbek published a collection of war-themed short stories, *Strah in pogum* (Fear and Courage, 1951), in which he questioned communist ethics in the war and portrayed the revolutionary characters in an existentialist way. This approach deviated significantly from the official picture of war events and Kocbek fell from political favor and was excluded from public cultural life for ten years. It was not until 1961 that Kocbek published a new collection of poems, receiving the Prešeren Prize for it, the most prestigious Slovenian literary prize at the time. From then on, he mainly dedicated his time to publishing his war diaries, poetry, nonfiction and translations, thereby becoming one of the most prominent Slovenian writers. In the mid-1970s, he once again found himself at the center of public controversy after publishing a book of interviews with Boris Pahor, a Slovenian writer from Trieste, renowned for his autobiographical novel *Nekropola* (Necropolis, 1967), which depicts life in a concentration camp. The Yugoslav authorities were particularly angered by Kocbek's discussion of the post-war massacres of anti-communist Slovenian Home Guard troops (*Domobranci*), who had collaborated with Nazi German forces during the war.[3]

Kocbek died in November 1981. The speech at his funeral in Ljubljana was delivered by the President of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Milan Kučan.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Zbrane pesmi*, 2 vols. (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977); *Svoboda in nujnost: Pričevanja* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1974); *Sodobni misleci* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1981); *Partizanski dnevnik: 1938–1945*, 2 vols. (Ljubljana: Sanje, 2022).

Context

"Premišljevanje o Španiji" (A Reflection on Spain) is one of Kocbek's most well-known texts, published in a special issue of the magazine *Dom in svet* dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of this distinguished Catholic intellectual magazine. The article attracted widespread attention, sparking great

3 Immediately after the war, the new government summarily killed over eleven thousand Home Guard troops that had been repatriated by the British Army in Carinthia, and executed members of various quisling formations from other parts of Yugoslavia, notably Croatia, who were captured in Slovenian territory at the end of the war. See Vida Deželak Barič, "Posledice vojnega nasilja: Smrtne žrtve druge svetovne vojne in zaradi nje na Slovenskem," in *Nasilje vojnih in povojnih dni*, ed. Nevenka Troha (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2014), 34–35.

excitement and causing a stir within conservative Catholic circles. Polemical responses appeared in various Catholic magazines, including *Straža v viharju* (Guard in the Storm), *Mi mladi borci* (We Young Fighters), *Slovenec* (The Slovene), and *Katoliško tiskovno društvo* (Catholic Print Society). The reaction also led to a temporary discontinuation of *Dom in svet*; the editorial board pulled the next issue, and the magazine only reappeared the following year with a new editorial team. Thus, Kocbek's article had a far greater impact than just on Kocbek himself, as it marked a pivotal moment for young Catholics in Slovenia. Kocbek did not collaborate with *Dom in svet* from that point onward. Instead, in 1938, he started a new magazine, *Dejanje* (Action), which he then edited until the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941. Through this endeavor, he established himself as one of the leading figures among the Christian socialists in Slovenia.

The Spanish Civil War—the central topic of Kocbek's article—was an event of immense transnational importance, a particularly sensitive topic and "a great crisis of conscience" for Catholic intellectuals, to use French historian Michel Winock's words.[4] Taking a closer look at Kocbek's references in his article, it becomes clear that he predominantly relied on material from the French magazine *Esprit*. In other words, Kocbek's views corresponded completely with the spirit and views of this magazine.

When it comes to the Spanish Civil War, many French Catholic writers, including Georges Bernanos, François Mauriac, and Paul Claudel, welcomed the July 1936 uprising of Spanish generals which started the war. In December of the same year, a right-wing proclamation to Spanish intellectuals was signed by, among others, Claudel, Drieu La Rochelle, Abel Bonnard, Léon Daudet, Henri Massis, and Ramon Fernandez. The bombing of Guernica in April 1937—which happened only several days after the text "Premišljevanje o Španiji" was published—had a significant international impact and contributed to a partial shift in Catholic circles's views on the war. The prevailing view among Catholic intellectuals in Europe, including that of Slovenia, was that the bombing of Guernica was a righteous and holy crusade against communism.[5]

One of the rare exceptions to this anti-communist trend, already from the autumn of 1936, was the circle around the French magazine *Esprit*. Dissatisfied with most responses to the war, which were at best neutral and usually on the side of the generals, the editor of *Esprit* Emmanuel Mounier began to publish documentation about the events in Spain. In this, he relied on correspondents from Spain such as José Bergamin and José María de Semprún Gurrea. Contemplating the fate of Spanish Catholics between the Red and White Terror, Mounier did

4 Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), 300.
5 See, for example, articles in the newspaper *Slovenec* from 1936 onward.

not see communism as an immediate threat, and preferred to support the idea of the Church under the blows of communism rather than under the protection of fascism.[6] In Mounier's view, the rebellion of the generals in Spain was a backward endeavor which led to the destruction of people and culture, and compromised spiritual values in their alliance with those in power. On the other hand, the risks of the legitimate government in Madrid were in the hostile attitude towards the Church and the possible progress of communism. Therefore, by publishing the testimonies of Spanish Catholics, priests and intellectuals, Mounier's main aim was to show that many Catholics were on the side of the Republic and, secondly, that the war in Spain was not a conflict between Catholicism and communism. This was especially the case with the Basque clergy and population. After the bombing of the Basque village of Guernica at the end of April 1937, many prominent Catholic writers followed the path of *Esprit*. For instance, left-leaning Catholic intellectuals such as François Mauriac, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Maritain, Mounier, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others signed the proclamation calling for the defense of the Basque people, published in the newspaper *La Croix* on May 8, 1937. Three prominent figures of the European Catholic intelligentsia—François Mauriac, Jean Maritain, and Georges Bernanos—in this way stirred strong reactions within the Catholic right. Soon after, Maritain would be labelled as a "red Christian." Like Mauriac, Georges Bernanos shifted his stance from initially supporting the generals' revolt to a clear and unequivocal condemnation of fascist crimes.

Turning the focus back on the Slovenian situation, in Catholic public opinion there was a similar trend of support for the Spanish generals, i.e., the fascists. However, beneath the surface, conflicts broke out within the Catholic camp. Already in December 1934, *Straža v viharju* accused the editorial board of *Dom in svet* of being an alleged bastion of Marxism, Protestantism, and modernism. Kocbek became involved in the polemic in 1935 and published the article "Enemu izmed ozkih" (To One among the Narrow-Minded).

The Slovenian People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*, SLS)—the main political force in the Slovenian part of the Kingdom at the time—underwent, from the end of the nineteenth century onward, a transformation modelled after the Austrian Social Christians (*Christlichsoziale Partei*) and turned from its original radical social Catholicism into a mass party that fought against liberals and social democrats. The political career of Anton Korošec, leader of the Slovenian People's Party after 1917, matched Karl Lueger's: charismatic leadership was matched with the defining role of the professional politician, and the party gained a bureaucratic

6 Michel Winock, *Histoire politique de la revue "Esprit", 1930–1950* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 129.

character as well.[7] However, the party was far from devoid of internal conflicts. On the contrary, its political dominance was opposed by the radical attitude of the younger generation of Catholics (*Krekova mladina*) who called for and further developed the idea of Christian solidarity from the time of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). Besides autonomism, the main characteristics of these oppositional currents were republicanism and Christian socialism.[8] It could be argued that this new current of political thought announced a new change of generations after the one in 1917/18, when Šušterčič's place within SLS was taken by Krek and then Korošec. The demands of the youth rested on Krek's legacy of Christian socialism, highly appreciated by a part of the young Catholic intellectuals in the Yugoslav Professional Association (*Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*). Their emphasis was on social and economic issues, on social reforms in the spirit of a Christian-social doctrine, and their criticism was mainly directed against the "elders," i.e., the clerical leadership of SLS and the Church. Relations with the leadership of SLS deteriorated especially from 1926/27, which was arguably the beginning of a new phase in the development of the Christian socialist movement in Slovenia. At that time, Anton Jeglič, Bishop of Ljubljana, worked to suppress them.[9] This conflict, which emerged already in the 1920s, took on new contours after the introduction of the Royal dictatorship in 1929, and especially the economic crisis in 1931. From then on, Christian socialists became more open to the ideas of Marxism and the issue of class struggle, although they remained faithful to a Christian ethos and a focus on moral problems. By 1934, the Christian socialists managed to break free from the original context of the SLS.

Why, then, did Edvard Kocbek author an article which caused such a conflict in the Catholic camp? In other words, how did he become such a faithful representative of the line of thought that marked the *Esprit* magazine? Kocbek's intellectual transformation allows for a closer interpretation.

When the young Kocbek left his studies of theology in 1927, he undoubtedly experienced a major crisis of conscience. A convinced young Catholic, he had initially been a true representative of the radical youth's mood. He actively published in periodicals such as *Stražni ognji*, *Križ na gori*, *Križ*, *Socialna misel*, and *Dom in svet*. He also spoke in December 1927 at a gathering of the Krek Youth

7 Karl Lueger (October 24, 1844–March 10, 1910) was an Austrian lawyer and politician who served as Mayor of Vienna from 1897 until his death in 1910. See, for example, John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna. Origins of the Christian Social Movement 1848–1897* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

8 Janko Pleterski, *Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1985), 220.

9 Momčilo Zečević, *Na istorijskoj prekretnici. Slovenci u politici jugoslovenske države 1918–1929* (Belgrade: Prosveta, Institut za savremenu istoriju–Ljubljana: Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja, 1985), 128.

(*Krekova mladina*). However, as Bishop Jeglič noted in his diary, Kocbek spoke "in a modern manner" and he failed to understand him.[10] The following year, he became a member of the Workers' Publishing House (*Delavska založba*) at the Cooperative Union (*Zadružna sveza*) in Ljubljana.

Intimately, he was a young man who felt the "burden of his era": a sentiment that Lucien Goldmann would later identify as central to the existentialist stance of the young generation between the two world wars.[11] Kocbek's studies in Romance languages guided him toward broader horizons, particularly toward French literature. In Berlin, he attended lectures by Romano Guardini, a later opponent of the Nazis, who held the chair of philosophy of religion at the University of Berlin and was considered one of the key figures in the liturgical movement. France, where Kocbek spent time in the early 1930s, offered an especially insightful "vantage point" of the time, marked as it was by stark ideological polarizations and conflicts. This period saw the emergence of several nonconformist groups, including left-wing Catholics gathered around Emmanuel Mounier and Georges Izard.[12] From December 1930 to October 1932, they worked to launch the journal *Esprit*. They were profoundly influenced by Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which expressed concern about social inequalities and the poverty caused by capitalism.

Out of Mounier's circle emerged personalism as a variant of Christian existentialism. As a "third way" between capitalism and communism, personalism sought to place simultaneous emphasis on the individual and the community. The personalists, namely, believed that one must start from concrete social and historical situations, whereas the individual has significant self-actualization power through free and responsible action. With this, they aimed to reconcile the "private, public, and spiritual," and, at the same time, to distance the spiritual from the "reactionary." Moreover, the turbulence within Catholic circles was particularly visible in France, and the roots of this turbulence can be found already from the papal condemnation of Charles Maurras' *Action Française* in 1926, as well as the gradual distancing of prominent writers and thinkers from the conservative Catholic right. Two parallel processes thus unfolded: the Catholic right gravitated toward fascism, while its more moderate and left-wing factions embraced the "republican paradigm" and aligned with the Popular Front, comprising socialists,

10 Janko Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov v Osvobodilno fronto slovenskega naroda* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977), 85.

11 "Structuralisme, marxisme, existentialisme. Un entretien avec Lucien Goldmann," *L'Homme et la société* 1, no. 2 (Oct.–Dec. 1966): 105–24.

12 Enzo Traverso, "Polarisations idéologiques," in *La vie intellectuelle en France*, vol. 2, *De 1914 à nos jours*, eds. Christophe Charle and Laurent Jeanpierre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2016), 201–26.

communists, and left-liberal radicals. This polarization would reach its peak in the context of events surrounding the Spanish Civil War.[13]

The articles which Kocbek published in the magazines *Dom in svet* and *Dejanje* from the mid-1930s reflect his deep internal struggle regarding the mentioned divisions. This series of articles begins with the extensive and thorough "Pogled na novo gibanje francoske omladine" (A Look at the New Movement of French Youth, 1935), continues with biographical essays on the canonical figures of Christian existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard (1935) and Charles Péguy (1936), book reviews of André Gide (1936), and extends to studies on Maritain (1938), Denis de Rougemont (1938), as well as writings on Bernanos (1940) and Henri Bergson (1941). The same thread can be traced in his essays dedicated to Slovenian or broader issues.

In this context, the article "A Reflection on Spain" demonstrates an unequivocal cultural transfer that is intriguing for several reasons. Set against the backdrop of the 1930s and the sensitive era of Popular Front politics, it reveals the global interconnectedness of the themes Kocbek addresses. Thus, although indirectly, he connects Slovenian circumstances with broader European currents. The article, moreover, is equally significant when explored in the context of the significance it had on Kocbek's personal development, as it exemplifies his alignment with personalist ideas—a foundational and enduring element of his intellectual work and public engagement. Finally, "A Reflection on Spain" had broader implications for the emancipation and shaping of Christian socialists in Slovenia as an autonomous group; in the period leading up to Second World War, this group would seek pathways to active participation in the turbulent events to come.

Relatively extensive (fifteen printed pages), "A Reflection on Spain" is divided into six sections with an introduction. In the introduction, Kocbek examines the contemporary spiritual crisis, discussing particularly what he refers to as "bourgeois Christianity." Following the introduction, his primary focus is the definition of fascism, for which he used the example of Spain. Immediately rejecting the prevailing opinion in the European Catholic press, which framed the conflict in Spain as a "crusade" against Bolshevism, his principal target is dominant Catholic public opinion, both in Europe and in Yugoslavia, and among Slovenians.

In the first chapter, Kocbek frames the "Spanish question" primarily as an agrarian and social one. He highlights the spiritual weakness of the Spanish Church and places the responsibility mainly on the higher clergy. His second chapter focuses on the political events from 1931 to 1936. In the third section,

13 See Herbert R. Lottman, *La Rive gauche. Du Front populaire à la guerre froide* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981). Frederick Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason. France, 1914–1940* (New York: Anchor Books, 2015).

the author condemns the crimes committed by both sides in the civil war, but he emphasizes the need to critique the "white terror" and the actions of the fascist generals. According to Kocbek, communism primarily serves as a pretext for their objectives. In the fourth chapter, Kocbek further criticizes the attacks on the Catholic Church but simultaneously questions what the Church did during the generals' uprising, aside from aligning itself with them. The fifth chapter delves further into examples of the brutality of the fascist camp, the ideas and statements of the generals, and includes a separate discussion of "fascist Christianity," using the example of terror against Basque Catholics. Defending the Basques, Kocbek emphasizes how Basque priests shared their people's fate and remained connected to them. Finally, in the sixth chapter, Kocbek offers readers a kind of testament through the example of those Catholics who sided with the Republic—a minority he sees as preserving the Church's honor. He concludes his article with their manifesto.

EDVARD KOCBEK
A Reflection on Spain

"Many a Christian is now either Pilate or Hamlet."
José Bergamin

Nowadays, life is no longer marked by clarity but rather by a general and intentional vagueness. Ambiguity and blandness are not only natural companions of life but represent an essential and conscious tenet of humanity which has lost its heroic sense. The more widespread and numerous a civilization becomes, the more its influences turn anonymous. Therefore, vagueness is not just some psychological category but rather a general social reality. Social participation is thus a series of masked benefits competing for spiritual superiority based on the free competition of vital forces.

This vagueness can only be caused by the deceitful human spirit that has proliferated in the world in recent centuries and lost itself in its dimensions. Ontology states that humans, in their convenient love for the material world, lose the precious spiritual freedom that comes from being independent of the forces of the world and become slaves to a lonely nature.… The man who chooses safety instead of exposure, sobriety instead of heroism, and fragmentation instead of integrity is a spiritual bourgeois, a man without creative

meaning, the greatest heresy of modernity. We also know his mask, for the essence of the bourgeois spirit lies not in an open rejection but rather in a concealed relinquishing of human integrity and heroism. All heresies and apostasies have usually been obvious acts, representing the spiritual heroism of convinced people who, of their own conscience, choose the greater and better truth, while the bourgeois apostasy is insidious and disguised—a conscious and shameful substitution of the higher values for the inferior ones, which is why it wants to disguise its action from the outside and, in doing so, develops a brilliant dialectic. The bourgeois is a man with a double face, a deceitful double, a man of "goodwill" on the outside and a non-believer, sceptic, and even cynic on the inside. The bourgeois mentality is but a clandestine retreat into a lie, a lazy helplessness, unable to create coherence within itself and a clear relationship with the world. The bourgeois duality has nothing to do with a healthy, clear, natural human conflict between the transient and the eternal; its contradictory nature has nothing to do with human tragedy, just as its conservatism, nationalism, patriotism, and outright collectivism are in fact a denial of the free human spirit.

I

In recent years, it has become even clearer that the bourgeois is nothing but a geometric spirit, a weak and unconvinced being that does not fulfill its human determination but relies on the wisdom of the world and the impersonal mechanics of life. Even if the bourgeoisie essentially betrays what it means to be human, they nevertheless want to give the impression that they represent a necessary and fertile middle ground, possess historical experience and truth, and are therefore entitled to legitimate action in all domains. To our amazement, we experience the paradox of the bourgeoisie putting themselves in the position of the guardians of life's spiritual foundations and assuming the leadership of social currents. The social bourgeois—a man of social advantages, which he may once have deserved but is no longer worthy of—meets and unites with the spiritual bourgeois, an inner Pharisee, and they want to prove, with their sudden activities, that they are worthy of their privileges. That is how fascism has been and is being born.

Fascism is a public, organized defense of the pragmatic hierarchical spirit with all social and spiritual means. The profound global shifts, political tensions, and detonations have given birth to and unleashed passionate forces that the fascist bourgeoisie has begun to exploit to gain strength. Everywhere, fascism assumes the image of an anti-Marxist fighter, while in reality, among

its ranks, people are losing their personality and freedom in the same manner. Moreover, fascism sins by obscuring the social reality in the name of decency and by covering injustice with a cloak of order. Fascism presents itself as a mystical reaction of life over mechanisms, a reconstruction of a society in which the human duty to create is opposed by the duty to preserve and which sees the spirit only as order, discipline, force, vitality, and success. In this apparently unified truth, fascism is even more dangerous than communism, for if communism constructs its false outlook clearly and openly, fascism develops its own in apparent conformity with all the spiritual principles and institutions, while in reality it disintegrates the sacred hierarchical spirit of freedom by unconditionally defending the existing order. Haecker's question keeps resonating: Which is worth more: a dead truth or a living lie?

To a large extent, fascism has succeeded in appearing as the defender of spiritual and personal life, of law, order, regularity, and even universality. Therefore, it has easily won the affection of the bourgeois Christians—that is, the Christians who have merely inherited their faith and whose spiritual life is also based on acquired things, who do not create anything with their own creative fire but instead, with suspicious vigilance, regulate that which becomes even more lost through regulation. European Christianity is mostly caught up in this social viewpoint, where the sanctification of nature and history has taken precedence over the idea of changing the world. Bourgeois Christianity is beginning to pose as orthodox Christianity, and even the Church hierarchy is failing to oppose this onslaught with sufficient determination everywhere—which is no wonder, according to Berdyaev, since the clergy has always shown a tendency towards the bourgeoisie. This has resulted in the inevitable sad fact that fascism identifies its spirituality with Christian spirituality and exploits the religious sentiment, while, on the other hand, Christian practices do not exclude the close collaboration of the Church with fascist militancy. We should add that this impossible confusion is not only due to the general weakening of the Christian spirit throughout the world but also because of the conscious—overly conscious—service of many leading Christians to the secular, fascist forces.

Spain represents a shocking example. It reveals the guilt of historical and social Christianity, as well as the artificial concealment of that guilt. Clearly, those who speak of ambiguity in the Spanish case want to absolve themselves of the responsibility and indirectly serve the untruth; while whoever only defends a single position (and, interestingly, bourgeois Christians defend the fascist position) directly serves the lie. The European Christian press represents another sad chapter, as it has been unable to maintain its independence

and has taken the fascist side with but a few exceptions—just as the liberal press has often taken the anti-fascist side out of sheer convenience. The Christian press writes incessantly of the crusade against the Bolsheviks or the holy war of Christendom against the burners of churches, the murderers of priests, and the desecrators of women and children who drink human blood. Meanwhile, it says nothing about the causes of the terrible slaughter and devastation and even less about the fascist atrocities, which are at least as horrible as those committed by the raging people's masses.

These lines are intended to draw attention to the tragically divided truth about Spain and the fact that it represents something understandable. They aim to point out the historical guilt of Spanish Christianity and the guilt of those Christians who have nowadays taken refuge in external efficiency instead of internal focus. The intention of these lines is not to minimize the guilt for the crimes which have been and are still being committed against the Church in great numbers but to refute the insolent fascist attempt to shift the root of the conflict elsewhere by claiming that the Spanish civil war is a religious war. The reasons for the terrible reckoning in Spain are not religious but social.