

'Decline and fall of the Occident' from the Escher Tageblatt (20 November 1948)

Caption: On 20 November 1948, the Luxembourg daily newspaper Tageblatt deplores the influence of money, power and dictatorships in a Western world in full decline and advocates a return to human values.

Source: Tageblatt. Journal d'Esch. 20.11.1948, n° 270. Esch-sur-Alzette: Luxemburgs Genossenschaftsdruckerei. "Der Untergang des Abendlandes ", auteur:Rasquin, Michel , p. 1.

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Decline and fall of the Occident

Oswald Spengler was right: the Occident is falling into ruin. The Occident never had a political existence. What existed was a hotchpotch of many and varied peoples, races and cultures. Wars followed wars; the Occident was forever fighting itself. There was the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire and the primacy of the Pope, there was Napoleon and there was Hitler's Third Reich, all born out of battle and drowned in the blood that drenched European soil from Moscow to Calais. America and Russia today stand in Berlin, in the middle of the Occident.

What is the Occident? A geographical complex? A lifestyle, a form of life? An evolved form of human society? A culture? A civilisation? Nothing lasts forever on this earth, and if you stand beside a river, you never see the same water flowing past. And your own face, reflected in the water, changes from day to day.

Today, in the chaos of its fall, this Occident has become contemplative. It thinks about itself but cannot find itself. It does not find itself because it is looking for times past when it should be seeking something new. Because it contains forces that believe in recovery through resurrection, when only new birth can grow into a new future.

Our Christian Socialists look back into history and dream of a life form in which the spirit of faith would build cathedrals in which people of one faith and opinion would live together in harmony, balance and understanding. And where human misery would find consolation and hope in the expectation of God. Alas, it is only a dream, it has always been just a dream or, at most, a phase in the continuing chain of events. And class conflicts existed long before there were any Socialists.

There is no point in tiring oneself out in nostalgia for a past order. The world never stands still, and nothing that existed ever comes back. Forms of government have changed at the same time as forms of society, and both have changed with those productive forces whose taming by man constituted a victory over nature. After feudalism came the time of the mercantile bourgeoisie, followed then by finance and trust magnates. And now the Occident wonders what will come next ... The era of the 'managers' or the era of the peoples?

Our Christian Socialists ask themselves this question and then turn around. They stand still and look back. Whoever wants to build a future must both look and move straight ahead. The birth of the French Revolution was accompanied by the steam engine, only afterwards came an *encyclopédiste* or Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Electricity came next. Atomic energy is now ringing in the new era, and changes in production methods, the multiplication of available energy sources — victories of the human scientific spirit — lead to a revolution in society and state that nobody can prevent and that is opposed only by those who see their privileges endangered by it.

Christian Occident! Occident without Christianity. A spurious Christianity that is only a void, a pretence and a curtain. A Christianity prepared to cling on to the coat-tails of any dictatorship which in turn is prepared to take advantage of the Church — see Franco's Spain, Innitzer and Tiso — a Christianity falsified by money, rotting away through privileges, favours and sycophancy, a thousand years away from the true teaching of Christ ... Fall of the Occident.

No, there is no stepping back into history, either in economy or society. But Christianity can find its way back to Galilee where Jesus Christ once wandered as a preacher and was crucified for being an agitator of the masses.

Quo vadis, domine?

M. R.