

## THE HERESY OF EDVARD KOCBEK

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### Introduction

In an interview filmed shortly before his death, Edvard Kocbek called himself "a Protestant." What did he, who was indeed a religious man, but throughout his life participated in Catholic culture and even in Catholic politics, mean by this term? He meant several, but above all three, things. First, he declared himself to be, generally, a "man of protest": his biography is a series of protests against the authorities. Second, he wanted to call attention to a specific protest, i.e., to his (almost lifelong) criticism of the Church in Slovenia. He had openly broken with the Church in 1937, in his essay *Premišljevanje o Španiji* [Reflections about Spain], and continued to oppose its policies during World War II. However, third (it is suggested here), Kocbek also meant his break with the Communists. He did not only defy the official (Catholic) Church and become the leader of the social and religious movement called the *Krščanski socialisti* [Christian Socialists], but also later broke with the Communist 'religion' (theology?) of liberation. It is not so easy to determine when this break happened: the political disagreements between Kocbek and his comrades (note the title of the first part of his war diaries, *Tovarišija* [The Comrades] of 1949) began in 1943 and culminated in 1952; and yet Kocbek continued to use positive, even nostalgic terms when referring to his partisan associates, in his diaries and elsewhere, even later.

Instead of the term "Protestant" to characterize Kocbek's political, philosophical and also his literary position, we may use a less ambiguous term. He was certainly a *heretic*; and it is this aspect of his work and of his orientation that is of most interest here. It is, frankly, not simple to report on Kocbek's heresy today, following the publication in the last few years of several analyses of his life and work;<sup>1</sup> therefore, only a short summary of what is known about Kocbek's heresies will be presented here, followed by a more detailed study of the period 1975-1976, as interpreted from his **unpublished** diaries.<sup>2</sup>

### The First Heresy

The first heretical act of Edvard Kocbek occurred in 1937, in the leading Catholic (literary) journal *Dom in svet*. The 'problematic passage' is as follows:

"All heresies and dissensions [*odpadi*] were usually manifest acts, the spiritual heroism of a persuaded people who decided for a greater and better truth according to their faith, while a bourgeois secession is obscure and deceptive: it means the conscious and shameful exchange of higher values for lower ones; therefore such an act is kept secret and is accompanied by sparkling dialectic. A bourgeois is a man with a double face, a deceiving double . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The article in which this occurred, *Premišljevanje o Španiji*, was primarily a criticism by Kocbek of the Church's involvement with the Fascist side in the Spanish Civil War. The writer contradicted the 'leading Christians' who served Fascism, but he also blamed the Communists:

"As Christians we condemn the leftist unscrupulousness, therefore we must also criticize the greater violence. If as Christians we cannot approve of the red violence, we may much less be silent about the white terror."<sup>4</sup>



An intervention by the bishop, Gregorij Rožman, was required in the face of such blasphemy. In the official episcopal gazette he published a letter stating that Kocbek's article could "provoke in readers unjust judgments about the Catholic Church and a hatred towards it . . . The sentence [about the heresies], as written, is totally erroneous, and is opposed to the attitude and the teaching of the Catholic Church."<sup>5</sup>

The consequences were as follows: publication of the journal was discontinued for one year; its editors had to step down; and, the following year, Kocbek's group started the independent Christian Socialist journal *Dejanje*, the publication of which continued until the German occupation. This journal criticized Slovene culture and politics; it criticized Slovene Liberals, Josip Vidmar among them; and it did not refrain from criticizing the Church also. In 1938 Kocbek wrote that, instead of the imperative "Become what You are!", the requirement "Become what our doctrine demands!" had become established. At the time he was studying the French 'Personalists', and insisted on the importance of the 'personal consciousness'; without this, he believed, man would only be a producer and a consumer, a demonstrator and a soldier.<sup>6</sup>

This progressive attitude brought Kocbek closer to the group called *Društvo prijateljev Sovjetske Zveze* [Friends of the Soviet Union Society, henceforward *DPSZ*], a group inspired by the Communists and consisting largely of people active in culture and art. The key figures here were Josip Vidmar, the literary critic, and the secretary of the Slovene Central Committee, Boris Kidrič. Official history has it that the members of this society, and several representatives of Slovene political life (Communists, Christian Socialists, and members of the Liberal *Sokol* [Falcon] faction) established the *Osvobodilna fronta Slovenskega naroda* [Liberation Front of the Slovene People, henceforward *OF*] on April 27, 1941. The official interpretation insists on this early date because this would mean that the Slovene Communist Party were ignoring the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and were preparing for the armed struggle against the Italians and the Germans regardless of instructions from the Comintern. The actual beginning of the Slovene Resistance is difficult to determine, but it does appear that the establishment of the *OF* in April 1941 is extremely valuable to party historians: by dating it before Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, launched on June 22, they can demonstrate an anticipation of the break with Stalinism. On the other hand, they rarely forget to mention that Kocbek, otherwise the undisputed leader of the Christian Socialists, did not attend the meeting of April 27. This urge for accuracy manifested itself most keenly after Kocbek's exclusion from political life in 1952, and was repeated on the occasion of another of Kocbek's heresies, in 1975.

In this context, Kocbek's own words are very illuminating. On April 26, 1975, he wrote in his diary:

"Today they celebrated the memory of the Liberation Front. They still stick to the wrong date and to the meeting into which they stuffed more people than were there, with the only purpose of reporting in the [Evening] News that I was not among them. Why not? Because I was still full of reservations. Kidrič and I were still in the discussion stage."<sup>7</sup>

What were his reservations? A short excursion into the writings of Josip Vidmar and Edvard Kardelj will give us a rough idea. In 1963 Vidmar identified the members of the *OF* group as the same people who used to meet as the *Pripravljalni Organ* [Preparatory Organ] *DPSZ*.<sup>8</sup> In 1966, Vidmar referred to the founding meeting of April 27 as a meeting not of the *OF*, but of the "Antifašistična fronta Slovenije" [Anti-Fascist Front of Slovenia].<sup>9</sup> Kardelj was more explicit: in his speech at Pugled, in which he explained party



strategy and tactics, he admitted that, in the first period of the Liberation Movement, “. . . the emphasis was on the anti-imperialist line. At that time, the OF viciously used to attack English imperialism.”<sup>10</sup> Until June 1941 the OF, as it was actually called later, was an Anti-imperialist (i.e., Anti-Fascist, but mostly Anti-British) organization, and was more or less identical to the *DPSZ*. If we recall Kocbek’s views on the Spanish Civil War we can more easily understand why he had had “reservations” in 1941. For him the German-Soviet pact was a synthesis of “the red violence” and “the white terror,” and represented a major obstacle for his participation in the predominantly pro-Soviet group.<sup>11</sup>

Kocbek was able to become one of the OF leaders when it entered its ‘second tactical stage.’ This, according to Kardelj, was the period of “extension and fortification of the liberation movement,” when the OF had to be given “maximal breadth.” Kocbek may have been naive or just optimistic when he believed that this was the real strategy. His illusions came to an end in 1943 when he was compelled to sign the *Dolomitska izjava* [Dolomites Statement], a contract between the Communist Party and the two remaining ‘coalition partners,’ the Christian Socialists and the Liberal Sokols, which stripped these two groups of all political power. The Christian Socialists, who had served the Communists as a means of bringing the ‘Slovene Catholic masses’ to the progressive positions of the OF, had fulfilled their usefulness and—given the Italian capitulation, the anticipated end of the war, and the Partisan victory—could be dispensed with. They had to be set aside if the Party, after the war, was to achieve political monopoly, and this was of course its real strategy. But this is no occasion to deal with that problem in detail.

The extent of Kocbek’s resistance to the Dolomites Statement is not quite clear: some of the documents that could explain it have been lost or are inaccessible.<sup>12</sup> In *Listina* [Document] and other available materials Kocbek did not, at least not explicitly, appear to object to the Dolomites arrangement. He discussed a ‘horizontal’ division of labor—not a ‘vertical’ one—in the future Slovene society, whereby he envisaged harmonious co-operation between the Communists, committed to economic affairs, and the Christians, operating in the spiritual field. He called this relationship “not a tactical one, but the deeper and honest co-operation of two sincere and free partners.” Some controversial undertones are recognizable in his discussion—which was not an introductory speech, as it was open to the representatives of other coalition groups—at the above-mentioned OF convention in Pugled. He said:

. . . in the forceful fight for justice we shall not abandon our internal truth. We are not capable of separating truth from justice, nor vice versa . . . We wish to participate in all activities as true partners. We do not want to be subordinated pupils, second-class or third-class revolutionaries. . . None of you should regard Party membership as a merit and an automatic superiority; no-one among us should feel inferiority because, for formal reasons, he can not become a member of the Party.”<sup>13</sup>

In November 1943 Kocbek was sent as a member of the Slovene delegation to Jajce in Bosnia where the “Second Session of AVNOJ” [The Anti-Fascist Organization for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia] was taking place. He obviously had some doubts about his alienation from Slovenia, to which he did not return until as late as 1946. In *Listina* he reports a conversation with Kidrič, when his removal from the Slovene political scene was announced. Kocbek was to remain on the Supreme Staff, as the Minister for Education in the new ‘Common Government.’ He reacted as follows:

At first sight the news seemed really agreeable, but in fact it was disturbing, it



even shocked me. I immediately told [Kidrič] why: 'I have associated myself too closely with the Slovene liberation struggle to be able to disconnect myself from it in the middle of the process. I am no longer responsible only to myself, I am responsible to the comrades in all of Slovenia. First I should inform them personally, and ask for their opinion. But let me now give you my personal idea. If Slovenia is to become a truly sovereign Republic in the Yugoslav Federation, then my place is at home; there are others to act as representatives, especially because from the very start I took upon myself my share, with all the duties and responsibilities. I therefore want to participate in the final Slovene liberation, I would like to be present at the laying of the foundations of the new Slovenia, I would like to attend all the creative processes of our new beginning.'"<sup>14</sup>

In his afterword to *Listina* (the second instalment of his diary, ending with December 1943), Kocbek announced the sequel: *Partizanski dnevnik, tretji del* [A Partisan Diary, Part Three],<sup>15</sup> with details about its contents. It deals with the time of Kocbek's partisan activity in Bosnia and on the island of Vis, and ends with the liberation of Belgrade; these were certainly key periods in Yugoslav military and political development. In 1945, Kocbek was nominated minister (head of the Ministry for Slovenia) in Tito's cabinet, and remained at this post (and hence outside Slovenia) till 1946, when he was elected a Vice-President of the Presidium of the Slovene People's Assembly. In 1951, when his book of short stories *Strah in pogum* [Fear and Courage] appeared—causing a real political earthquake—he still held this last-named post. But in 1952 he was forced to resign from all his political duties, and he retired.

### The Second Heresy

Kocbek's second heresy—maybe his most serious—occurred in 1951, and it was a twofold one: his book *Strah in pogum* was both literarily a break with Socialist Realism and also a heretical political statement. To put it precisely: the authorities used the occasion of the publication of this controversial collection to rid themselves of this comrade of theirs who was becoming more and more awkward for them. Kocbek's was the last in the series of political purges. Right after the war the Communists had dealt with their war-time opponents (the executions of the Slovene quislings, the *domobranci* [defenders of the homeland]); and immediately afterwards they had dealt with their political adversaries (the Nagoda trial). Then in 1948 the ruling group had purged the pro-Soviet 'elements' (the Cominform trials) and the pre-war Party dissidents (the Dachau trials). Next in line were Church officials and the Christian Socialists: but the action stopped with Kocbek; nor was his punishment as severe as the preceding ones had been.

Kocbek's literary-political sin was to portray political enemies with the same human attention and the same literary sympathy as the Partisans. All had their doubts and ambiguities, and the author paid special attention to the spiritual, and especially the religious, components of their characters: an approach that was in considerable disharmony with the prevailing clichés of the straightforward fighters for and the true believers in Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. But, as mentioned above, the book served only as an excuse. In January 1952 all the Slovene newspapers were full of criticisms and protests with respect to Kocbek's "poisonous" stories and political behavior. In *Dnevnik* [Diary] 1951-1952 he reports on the "popular rejection" of his literature, and on the conversations with the political leaders who acted in accordance with this "will of the people." These notes are indeed a very important political document, and also an exciting piece of



literature. In 1952, Kocbek's chief judge was his former OF comrade-in-arms, Vidmar, who compared him with his/their political enemies, even with the quislings and with the "wartime speaker on the London radio." Vidmar concluded his "literary review" with the following passage:

"*Strah in pogum* is an expression of the strata of our own, and of European, society, that have lost all faith and hope, and especially have lost their political posts, and that now look for shelter in mystical nihilisms and nihilistic mysticisms, so that they should be able—at least in their imagination—to preserve some kind of superiority towards history which, in spite of everything, marches victoriously on towards its great goals, without them, past them and over them."<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, history kept marching on, while Kocbek—now retired—continued to write his diaries and (above all) his poetry: *Groza* [Horror] (1963), *Poročilo* [Report] (1969), and *Zbrane pesmi* [Collected Poems] (1977).

### The Third Heresy

In 1974 Kocbek celebrated his 70th birthday. As awkward as this may sound, this was another political turning point. As we read in his diaries for 1975, he was so enraged by the political authorities, who had chosen this anniversary to offend him again, that he decided upon revenge.

What exactly was the plan of 'the authorities'? Was it just a combination of ignorance, bad taste, clumsiness and hatred? It is difficult to say, but it does appear that Kocbek was extremely shocked by an article written by a reporter for *Delo*. This article emphasized not Kocbek's birthday, but his political 'sins.' Kocbek was indeed distressed by this lack of respect, but it may be suggested that he was even more distressed by the absence of the honors that were customarily bestowed upon distinguished revolutionaries on such occasions. Perhaps he even expected some kind of rehabilitation—an expectation that was totally unwarranted, given the political crisis in the country. 1974 was the year of the purges at the universities, the year of the new Constitution that resulted from the painful consolidation of power after the purges of the 'Liberals' such as Mika Tripalo in Croatia, Marko Nikezić in Serbia, and Stane Kavčič in Slovenia. Kocbek again showed more poetical than political talent. This is however less important, for he demonstrated civil courage and protested, once again, against the régime and its 'loss of historical memory.' This was his last heresy.

After his birthday, he gave an interview to his Trst/Trieste friend, the Slovene writer Boris Pahor, who published it in a special edition of his literary journal, *Zaliv*, dedicated to Kocbek. In this interview, Kocbek exposed one of the darkest sides of Slovene post-war history, the aforementioned execution of about 12,000 *domobrance*. These Anti-Communists had fled Yugoslavia during the last years of the war, but had been sent back across the Austro-Yugoslav border by the British authorities. The problem, of course, is that these people—who were, predominantly, Catholic-oriented German collaborators, but also included ignorant youths, many of them draftees—were not brought to trial, but were distributed to "camps" where mass executions took place in the spring and summer of 1945. This was a secret kept so well that, according to his report in the interview, even Kocbek (who at the time was highly placed) had not at first known about it. Here are Kocbek's words from his 1975 diary:



The essence of my interview is my report about the *domobranci* who were killed; therefore I shall first say that this is a very important moral declaration of mine. This declaration is determined on strictly personal grounds, and is an expression of my conscience. I wanted to liberate myself from this burden already in 1946, but they prevented me from doing so; then in 1948, but again it was impossible; and afterwards I did not, until today, have the opportunity in the domestic press. What was the dictate of my conscience? To deny my solidarity with those who had driven them to death. I support my moral statement with the fact that the *domobranci* were abandoned by all their officers and leaders, and that the British returned them to us as prisoners of war after the armistice was settled. The Geneva conventions imposed on us the duty to treat them as prisoners of war. Besides, during the war the OF Executive Council had declared that all those who committed offences against the nation would be tried in special courts. We did none of that, but had them killed without the trials that they deserved; I call this the greatest crime committed in its history by the Slovene nation against its own people. . . . The occasion for this statement was created by the terrible circumstances I experienced on my 70th birthday when the responsible people in the Central Committee and in *Delo* turned me over to being slandered in public, to mendacious evaluations—when suspicious people with impunity played a game with my conscience, the editors having purposely blocked all the protests they had received in connection with this unusual celebration. By giving the green light to these good-for-nothings, however, they inadvertently gave it to me too. Ever since 1970 I have opposed this interview, but now I feel that the hour has come for me to balance the weights on the scale. I have come to the conclusion that I shall discharge my conscience in the best possible way by defending the honor of those who can no longer defend themselves.”<sup>17</sup>

The interview triggered furious reactions: on the part of politicians, of Kocbek’s former comrades, and of people in the cultural sphere. Again, his former comrades Vidmar and Brejc-Javoršek were at hand. Once they had accepted their roles as Kocbek’s judges, they apparently adopted this as their lifelong (pre-)occupation. Vidmar, for example, published a text that, at first sight, looked like a philosophical and theoretical treatise on useful and useless death. Its interesting side is that in the introduction Vidmar disqualified, *on political grounds*, a short story by Ivan Cankar commenting on the horrors of World War I, with its famous phrase that “no tear has been shed in vain, no drop of blood shed for nothing.” Vidmar’s response:

“But what of [Cankar’s] radical generalizations, ‘never, never, no tear, no drop of blood’? . . . For us the readers, his inexplicable and unacceptable all-comprehension and all-forgiveness remain written in the face of eternity; but, thirty years later, under perfectly clear circumstances and in a completely clarified situation among Slovenes, Kocbek has repeated them, in *Strah in pogum*, and added a comparison similar to Cankar’s. Kocbek was motivated by his personal sympathies with the metaphysical orientation of the criminal side, while Cankar did what he did out of love for the nation and out of pity for man under exceptional circumstances and in a special life situation.”<sup>18</sup>

While Vidmar provided ‘just’ the ‘theoretical’ framework for the process of denigration that lasted almost a year—this essay being just the first and the most abstract in his series



of attacks on Kocbek and his “reactionary” friends, who included Heinrich Böll—the rest of the incriminatory material came directly from Slovene politicians, such as Mitja Ribičič, Franc Šetinc, and others. Kocbek was also summoned to two police hearings, on April 15 and on October 3, 1975. We know the contents of these conversations from Kocbek’s diaries; this means that they provide more of an insight into his mind than a verifiable picture of the Slovene political situation, but they nevertheless represent valuable documentary material for the historical and sociological analysis of that situation. First of all, two different questioners tried to warn and frighten the poet. They accused him of exploiting the precarious situation in which the country found itself, and of choosing an inappropriate occasion (the 30th anniversary of the liberation) for his revelations; and they found him responsible for subjectively and objectively supporting groups outside the country trying to subvert the Yugoslav régime. Since he regretted the tragic death of the *domobranci*, they accused him of siding with hostile elements; and they also threatened him with penal consequences.

These consequences never materialized as far as Kocbek himself was concerned, but two of his close friends, the judge Miklavčič and the journalist Blažič, were arrested and sentenced in 1976 to prison terms, as a direct result of the notorious interview in the Trieste journal. Its publisher, Boris Pahor, was denied entry into Yugoslavia, for, we believe, a period of one year. The affair took place at the nadir of the Slovene/Yugoslav ‘hard-line’ period, whereas a few years later a liberalization was to follow. One of the (paradoxical) highlights of the situation was that one of the incriminating items at Miklavčič’s trial, an item that had been found in the defendant’s possession, was a bulletin published by the Secretariat of the Interior that reproduced a speech by Mitja Ribičič at the Police Academy in which he had called Kocbek a *voluhar* [vole]. Ribičič, who at the time was President of the Socialist Union (the umbrella organization that succeeded the OF), gave the semi-official Ljubljana weekly *Naši razgledi* permission to reprint Kocbek’s interview in May 1975. *Naši razgledi* later published many reactions that were critical of Kocbek and quite rude, whereas it published no articles that were sympathetic to him, although, according to Kocbek, these did exist.

### A tentative periodization

As mentioned above, Kocbek’s second and third heresies, those of 1952 and 1975, occurred in the middle of Slovene and Yugoslav political crises. As is well-known and even confirmed by analyses on the part of Yugoslav social scientists, these crises occur with great regularity, approximately every seven years. Yugoslav and Slovene political development appears to oscillate between ‘liberal’ and ‘dogmatic’ periods. In the fifties Stalinism was on its way out; 1958, when the Party changed its name (to *Zveza Komunistov* [League of Communists]) and, more importantly, its program, was perhaps the climactic year. There followed a downward curve until the mid-sixties, which brought the crisis, an economic reform, and a purge of the ‘hard-liners.’ The remainder of the sixties was a period of recovery and hope which reached its peak at the end of the decade. In the beginning of the seventies, however, the pendulum started to swing back, and it traveled (in twilight) for nearly ten years, until Tito’s death. In contrast to the ‘golden’ late sixties, the seventies were, to adapt the Slovene proverb, the *leta suhih krav* [years of lean cows].

Kocbek’s *Strah in pogum* was published in a sensitive period, 1951-1952, when ‘liberalism’ was indeed on the upswing, but was still very weak: no substantial disagreement with Communist fundamentals was permitted (cf. the Djilas case). But it is surely safe to argue that Kocbek, like Djilas, contributed to the process of de-Stalinization, and that his



book was a real landmark. The location of the second heresy in 1975 was, in a way, similar, although (according to the 'pendulum-theory' sketched above) it landed in a period of 'decline.' The Trieste interview meant no support for the Liberals, at least not in the short term, for they were now all buried and forgotten; but it did heap some more stones on their graves. After the interview, the overall political situation continued to deteriorate, and it reached its nadir only in the late seventies when the process of reaction began. It is possible that in 1975-1976 Kocbek did open some eyes and windows; but, although these were open, the liberals had to sit tight (lie in their 'graves' with open eyes?!) for some time. If the 'oscillation-theory' is no more than an insecure crutch for historical understanding, it can nevertheless perhaps explain the lengthy duration, the successes, and the failures of various cultural ventures. It is possible to speculate what might have happened if Kocbek had chosen different times for various actions. *Strah in pogum* might have achieved greater success if it had appeared a few years later. The interview might have been welcome in 1980. After all, Spomenka Hribar and *Nova revija* have, in the optimistic, 'rising' eighties, said even more than Kocbek did.<sup>19</sup>

### Conclusion

The above comments are of course only speculative. Kocbek's heresies of 1937, 1952 and 1975—regardless of their timing, be it well- or ill-chosen—made, in the long run, substantial contributions to the democratization of Slovene cultural and political life. A short comment on the principles and future prospects of this life follows, by way of conclusion.

Kocbek's heresies, especially those of 1952 and 1975, were *paradigmatic* political acts in the context of an authoritarian political situation. This situation is caught in a vicious contradiction: under these circumstances, any systematic radical criticism coupled with an eventual systematic radical political act could only lead to social catastrophe; but these circumstances can only be changed with radical criticism and radical action. The vicious circle of a *realni socializem* [really existing Socialism] consists of the fact that its political effectiveness may only be achieved by democratization, while democratization will sweep away the *realni socializem*. The true resolution would be catastrophic, and only a catastrophe would be the resolution. Kocbek was aware of this fact. As an intellectual and as a poet he could not deny it, but as a politician he saw the consequences.

Some of Kocbek's benevolent critics reproach him for not making political statements while he was still part of the *nomenklatura*; for example, for not formulating the message of *Strah in pogum* in political terms, or for not coming forward much earlier with the statement about the execution of the *domobranci*. But Kocbek was simultaneously fearful and courageous—full of both *strah* and *pogum*—a state of mind typical of intellectuals in the *realni socializem*. For example, he was, after having signed the Dolomites Statement during the war, especially as a Christian, aware of the human suffering implied in an eventual political resistance, both an anti-Communist and an anti-Fascist one. He condemned his fellow-Christians who mixed religion and politics in such a radical way as they did during their partnership with the occupation forces, and he hoped for an arrangement with the Communists. He abhorred and condemned the 'low' politics of the Slovene collaborators. In 'high' politics he remained a moralist and a poet. Since this is not a treatise on Slovene politics, there is no place for a discussion of the paradigmatic absence of a political view that would be neither 'low' (collaboration with a foreign power) nor just morally 'high'. Where the political space is occupied by a single party supported by a strong faith, such as Marxism, the alternative position (of an eventual opponent) can only



be that of a martyr, a moralist, or a poet: precisely, the position of a heretic. This may have been emphatically so in the Slovene case, because of the limited physical resources of the nation, which could hardly afford another catastrophe. Under these circumstances, Kocbek's heresies were highly typical. Their similarity among themselves—the similarity between his pre-war and his post-war heresies—is not coincidental. As stated above, the Liberation movement in which Kocbek participated and from which he excluded himself was to a certain extent a religious movement; the Party was another Slovene Church. The situation was ideal for the production of heretics.

Slovene history has exhibited quite a number of cases similar to Kocbek's. During the 19th century, when Slovenia was part of the Austrian Empire, Slovenes fought for cultural and linguistic rights, and their leaders were poets and writers. In modern Yugoslavia, Slovenes have produced professional politicians; but they hesitate to defend Slovene national interests for many reasons, primarily because they depend on a doctrine of class association and class struggle, and because of the principle of 'democratic centralism' that binds them to the central authorities, and in a way also to the old Church of the Proletarian revolution. Again, people like Kocbek, although regrettably his less inspired pupils, are now beginning to raise their voices against political injustices and mendacities.<sup>20</sup> The Slovene cultural syndrome is alive and well.

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## NOTES

- \* Revised version of paper presented at the AAASS 19th Annual Convention, Boston MA, November 1987.
- 1. See, first, the texts by L. Legiša in *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva VI: ekspresionizem in novi realizem* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1969); H. Glušič and B. Paternu in *Slovenska književnost 45-65 I* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1967); A. Inkret in Edvard Kocbek, *Zbrane pesmi I-II* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977); T. Hribar in *Sodobna slovenska poezija* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1984); second, collections of Kocbek's writings and monographs such as *Svoboda in nujnost* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1974); *Pred viharjem* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1981); and *Človek je utihnil* (Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1983). See also H. Glušič, "The prose and poetry of Edvard Kocbek (1904-1981)," *Slovene Studies* 8/2 (1986) 65-72, and some publications by the present author: his introduction to Edvard Kocbek, *Dnevnik 1951-1952* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), and his afterword in Edvard Kocbek, *Strah in hrabrost* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1982); also D. Rupel, *Besede božje in božanske* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1987). One of the most recent volumes in Kocbekiana is D. Rupel, ed., *Kocbekov zbornik* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1987), the publication of which was delayed for three years, because of the inclusion of an essay by Spomenka Hribar, a passionate comment on the interview with Kocbek in Trieste.
- 2. Kocbek's family is in possession of a closetful of his handwritten notebooks, which cover the whole period from the end of the war until his death in 1981. His heirs allowed the present writer to transcribe his diaries of 1951 and 1952 (cf. note 1) and the following notebooks: "1.-25. april 1975", "26. april - 28. maj 1975", "29. maj - 27. junij 1975", "22. september - 17. oktober 1975" and "1. - 31. januar 1976."
- 3. Edvard Kocbek, "Premišljevanje o Spaniji," *Dom in svet* 1937/38. 1-2: 90.
- 4. Kocbek, "Premišljevanje," 97.
- 5. *Škofijski list* August 2, 1937.
- 6. "Človek proti samemu sebi," *Dejanje* 1938: 229-231.
- 7. Kocbek's notebook "26. april - 28. maj 1975."
- 8. Josip Vidmar, *Srečanje z zgodovino* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1963) 17.
- 9. Josip Vidmar, *Dnevniki* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1968).
- 10. Speech by Edvard Kardelj at the Convention of OF Activists, Pugled, April 28-29, 1943; cf. *Dokumenti ljudske revolucije v Sloveniji VI* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega giba-



- nja, 1981). It should be added that the Party and the official OF press did not mention *Osvobodilna fronta* under its (official) name until August 1941.
11. The first 'tactical' phase, for Kardelj, coincided with the actual 'strategy' of the *Narodno-osvobodilno gibanje* [NOG], which was, in his words, "the general annihilation of imperialism on our soil," cf. *Dokumenti* . . . VI.
  12. Kocbek apparently reported about this in the third part of his war diaries, supposedly covering the years 1944-45. Kocbek's friends, and he himself in his 1975 diaries, claim that the manuscript was stolen. As a matter of fact, if we consider *Tovarišija* as Diary I, and *Listina* as Diary II, there is no Diary III. Some experts (Kocbek's enemies, indeed, e.g., Jože Brejc-Javoršek and Josip Vidmar) have insinuated that, on the outside, Kocbek consented to Party dictates, but that he continued to 'illegally' cultivate his Christian Socialist connections.
  13. Kocbek's discussion on April 29, 1943, at Pugled, cf. *Dokumenti* . . . VI 336-338.
  14. Edvard Kocbek, *Listina* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1967) 457.
  15. See note 12 above on the fate of this instalment.
  16. Josip Vidmar, "Edvard Kocbek: 'Strah in pogum'," *Novi svet* 1952, 1. Cf. also D. Rupel, "Kocbekova strah in pogum," *Nova revija* 1 (1982) 7-8: 685-688; also Kocbek, *Dnevnik 1951-1952*.
  17. Kocbek's entry for 15 April, in his unpublished notebook "1. - 25. april 1975."
  18. Josip Vidmar, "Sub specie aeternitatis - Dva zapisa," *Sodobnost* 23 (1975) 3: 195.
  19. *Nova revija* has published Kocbek's diaries for 1952 and will, hopefully, publish those for 1975.
  20. Cf. the articles by Ciril Zlobec, a Slovene poet and currently the Vice-President of the Socialist Union of Slovenia (SZDL), with their characteristic titles "Sram mi je," *Delo* July 25, 1987, and "Zapisujem z bolečino," *Delo* August 8, 1987.

## POVZETEK

### HEREZIJA EDVARDA KOCBEKA

*Esej je posvečen eni najpomembnejših slovenskih literarnih in političnih osebnosti. Življenje in delo Edvarda Kocbeka označujejo številni konflikti, najprej z uradno cerkvijo, po letu 1951 pa s komunistično oblastjo. Avtor, ki je sam urejal in komentiral več Kocbekovih tekstov, začena pripoved s škandalom, ki ga je leta 1937 v vodstvu slovenske cerkve povzročil Kocbekov antifašistični, a tudi antistalinistični članek "Premišljevanje o Španiji". Usoden je bil spor okrog zbirke novel Strah in pogum (1951-52), posebno politično razburjenje pa je zbudil tudi Kocbekov "tržaški intervju" (1975), v katerem je Kocbek širši javnosti odkril tabuiziran podatek o okrutni, predvsem pa moralno in pravno sporni likvidaciji v Avstrijo pobeglih in po osvoboditvi "vrnjenih" domobrancev. V Kocbeku avtor odkriva samostojno, do vseh cerkva skeptično figuro, ki je pomembno določila slovensko povojno politiko, čeprav je bila v sporu z njo.*