

IVAN MERZ

DIARY

1914 – 1928

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FOREWORD
OF THE BISHOP OF BANJA LUKA
Msgr. FRANJO KOMARICA



Finally, we have in our hands the long-awaited Diary of the blessed Ivan Merz. It reveals to us in a particular, impressive way the sincerity and credibility of a young man, a Christian from our region who surpassed, in an unusual way, the time in which he lived.

Jesus' words addressed at Nicodemus "The Spirit blows where it pleases" (cf. John 3,8) came true many times in the long history of the Church. A man, God's favorite, must only open his inner self, his heart, to the Spirit, in order to receive its promptings and follow its light. Then he will feel something new, strong, which truly renews him from within, transforms him and he/she will be able to accomplish good, beautiful and useful things – within himself /herself and in his/her environment.

The Evangelist Mark writes how Jesus on one occasion went up into a mountain, "and summoned those he wanted" (Mark 3,13). Jesus' call of grace aimed at the young Ivan during his school days in the Banja Luka High School was only the beginning of the exceptional gifts of God's grace which would follow on many occasions of his later life, many of whom were recorded by their blessed recipient and left as a gift for the generations that followed.

Many other true Christian leading figures have had similar experiences, where they were enveloped in God's grace, receiving it consciously and responsibly, truly believing Christ's word and beginning to cooperate and live with Him in a most intimate manner. In such a way they began to witness in their lives the heavenly realm, i.e. realities which are not accessible to us by ordinary human measures.

True happiness is not achieved by human means, but primarily and chiefly by the presence of the Spirit of God moving inside a man's soul. This is being witnessed also by the contents of this fourth volume of the Collected Works of bl. Ivan Merz, his Diary. In the pages of this Diary we can recognize a "red thread" of graceful acts of the Holy Spirit in the life, ripening, spiritual contemplation and exceptional apostolic activity of this young Catholic intellectual of lay rank. By opening himself to these promptings, the young Ivan discovered more and more the truth about life and the world; he experienced more and more deeply the existence of good and evil in the world, and the existence of a spiritual-mystical design and reality inside the Church. In the Diary, he speaks about his own existential religious experience, especially in the dramatic days amidst the horrors of war. It is well known that major political upheavals give a free rein both to the good and the evil. For him the Holy Writ and many of those who have made it their spiritual food became indispensable pointers even in war-time for his spiritual ripening, on the path of making his own soul a "masterpiece".

The pages of the Diary which Ivan began to write as a high school graduate in Banja Luka, and wrote a major part of it here in his native town, give us a penetrating insight into his inner world and his striving to develop himself on the foundations of Christian faith and morale in a confident stride toward Christian perfection. The publication of Ivan's Diary as his first written work, though it came into being progressively, has a

chronological primacy before all the other of his numerous written works, shorter and longer. It will be of use to all who are inspired by this true spiritual giant from our region, to get to know him even better, to admire him and take him as their model in life. Because he is veritably a precious “shining example of the Christian way of life and apostolic striving” (John Paul II) and therefore he has lots to offer to all seekers of God and recipients of God in this and future generations.

In a conversation in Rome, in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in the wake of Ivan’s beatification, I was told that Ivan Merz “is a greater saint than many officially proclaimed saints” and that “his Diary is an exceptionally rich source in which the moves of God’s grace and man’s cooperation with this grace are mirrored”.

If we are justified to say that a “beautiful thought is the best companion”, then we are also justified to say that many beautiful and original thoughts of this Croatian “thinker and spiritual teacher” will enrich with their content many of those who will read and contemplate them.

The Diary of the Bl. Ivan Merz is being published in the year 2014, a hundred years after he began keeping it. The preparations for its publication were completed at the end of the Year of the Faith (11 October 2012 – 24 November 2013) proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI. This Pope, in his own admission, greatly appreciates Ivan’s “unique personality”. Already in the second year of his pontificate, in 2007, he enlisted the Bl. Ivan Merz among 18 great saints who “gave the testimony of authentic life thanks to their veneration of the Holy Eucharist” (Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, No. 94). With this act, Peter’s successor once again confirmed Ivan’s sanctity to which he was rising progressively, with firm steps, as we can trace through his Diary. It is our wish that the reader, observing the path of faith along which God’s grace has led the bl. Ivan Merz, renews and fortifies his/her faith and builds his/her life upon these values.

Banja Luka, Feast of Christ the King, 24 November 2013.

✠ Franjo Komarica, the Bishop of Banja Luka

INTRODUCTION to the Diary of bl. Ivan Merz

“Yesterday, on Thursday, we wrote a school paper on the values of a diary. Maraković clarified for us the great value of this (...) During the lesson, and the whole day I was thinking about it and came to the conclusion that Ljuba¹ is right – as always.”

When the young, 17-year old Ivan Merz wrote these first sentences at the beginning of his Diary on 27 February 1914 in Banja Luka, surely he didn't have the slightest inkling as to what kind of valuable document he was about to give us. In the pages of the Diary he left us a great spiritual wealth, describing his soul as the soul of a young man, fair, honest, striving for something supreme, facing evil inside himself and around him, confronting this evil, trying to achieve something in life, something in which he ultimately succeeded. Analyzing his Diary from the religious point of view we perceive a clear working of God's grace in his soul, promptings to which he responded and cooperated with, until he made his soul into a masterpiece, as he felt he ought to do.²

Chronologically, this is Merz's first literary work, compared to all other later texts, articles, studies which he wrote. The writing of this work actually didn't stop for his entire lifetime. However, as we can follow by the dates, he wrote more than half of the Diary before all other writings, of which only a smaller part he managed to publish during his lifetime. Many remained as manuscripts which are seeing the light of the day only now, finally, as part of his Collected Works.

Right at the beginning we must advise the reader that this Diary, which is now published as the 4th volume of Ivan Merz's Collected Works, is not his autobiography (nor biography), because it was never written with such an intent. This is only one, and we are sure to say, the most important, segment of his rich personality whose picture he left us in written form. The Diary contains relevant documentation of his intellectual profile and spirituality, which, however, is still in the process of ripening towards full maturity. By intellectual profile I imply the psychological-cultural-scientific facets of his personality which gradually developed and were formed by education, in the course of the studies and under the impact of the many literary works which he read. Spirituality, on the other hand denotes his Catholic religious and moral convictions which also developed and matured all the way to sanctity, towards which he was steered and guided by the invisible hand of God.

While in the Diary we can follow his developmental path, a full and complete Merz can be found only in the last six years of his life in Zagreb when he shone forth in full swing of his creativity and apostolic work, about which he has also left us numerous documents, albeit of a different nature. In that period, he didn't manage to keep his Diary, obviously because he was too busy. However, these other fruits of his spiritual work as a mature Catholic intellectual speak clearly about the richness of his inner life. These are in the first place numerous articles, studies and other texts whose publication within his Collected Works is in progress. In addition to that, we have numerous testimonies given by his contemporaries who observed at a close distance this “miracle of God's grace” as Merz was called by the late Cardinal Franjo Kuharić.³

¹ Dr. Ljubomir Maraković. Merz mentions him in the Diary under three nicknames: Ljuba, Ljuban, Luban.

² Before going into the army, Ivan wrote in his Banja Luka notebook of his Diary on 28 February 1916 these thoughts: “Before leaving for the army, I will write a word or two more. With this, namely, I finish this diary with which I wanted to cultivate my inner nature and create a masterpiece of my soul. I feel I am still far from this goal. (...)”

³ Cardinal Franjo Kuharić, Sermon in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 10 May 1982 on the anniversary of Ivan Merz's death

Such complete Merz and a full account of his personality we find in four biographies in which the authors, each from his own point of view, described the life and work of the bl. Ivan.⁴ We therefore recommend to the reader, if he/she wants to get a rounded picture of Merz's individuality, to read, after this Diary, at least one of these biographies in order to complete the picture of this marvel of Catholic laity in the Croatian Church.

Sincerity

Reading the pages of Merz's Diary we notice a particular virtue of his: it is his sincerity with which he describes and commits to paper without embellishment or denial every corner and movement of his soul, everything he experiences and goes through, along with his perceptions of everything he encounters in his environment and daily life. It is precisely this sincerity which attracts and inspires the reader because on the pages of his Diary, everyone, especially a young man can easily recognize himself. Ivan is often critical towards himself, and he keeps account of his weaknesses, struggles, doubts, and does not shy away from describing his strivings and thinking touching the most intimate part of his being, such as those relating to love and sexuality. Of course, he describes all of that within the limits of decency and within the vision of the Christian morale. Further on, we marvel at his struggle to overcome his bad inclinations, a sincere devotion to God, gradual victories over the negative aspirations of the human nature.

In his Diary Merz describes his numerous encounters with friends and various people, his impressions and thoughts about them. He was meeting also with some politicians of his day, especially during and after the war. Special attention is given to his encounters with the world of literature and with the books he read. He discusses the contents of the books, their message as well as the personalities in those books, analyzes them, debates with them, commends if he finds something valuable in them, but also criticizes their unacceptable attitudes and world views when he comes upon them.

Comparison with St. Augustine

To an extent, we might compare the *Confessions* of St. Augustine with the Diary of Ivan Merz. There exists, of course, a great difference. While St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions* from memory at the end of his life and from a completely different viewpoint, i.e. as a convert fully dedicated to God, Merz wrote his own "confessions" found in the Diary *en route*, day by day, on the path of conversion, portraying events as they unfolded, and as the states of his soul evolved. Apart from his own inner world, he relates a number of important and interesting details from his daily life – meetings with people, comments on social and political affairs, etc. Therein lies the value and greatness of this Diary, and we dare to say that, viewed from a certain aspect and with his closeness to our time and realities, he even surpasses Augustine's *Confessions*.

Two major parts of the Diary

Ivan Merz's Diary is a unique literary work which encompasses different contents, but above all it reflects his personal inner life which he lived at a certain historic point in time. After initial noting-down of daily events and commenting on them during the first few months, Ivan's Diary gradually becomes a notebook for recording his reading routine in which he writes down the contents, illustrations and analyses of literary works which he read, because literature was firstly his great hobby, and it later became his profession.

Therefore, we can divide his Diary into two major parts which are partly mixed, although they can basically be differentiated from each other. The first and main part of his Diary relates to his intellectual profile and spirituality; here he notes down his inner experiences and thoughts, problems, encounters with people, daily events in a broader

⁴ 1. D. Kniewald, *Life and work of Dr. Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 1932; - 2. J. Vrbaneč, *The Knight of Christ – Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 1943; - 3. B. Nagy, *Warrior from the White Mountains (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 1971; - 4. F. Veraja, *Ivan Merz – Pioneer of the Catholic Action in Croatia (in Italian)*, Rome, 1998

social environment, adding to them his own comments. A special place in this personal part of the Diary, the part which is by all means the most interesting one, is occupied by his religious thoughts and comments on religion, spiritual life, moral principles and problems.

The other part of the Diary relates to numerous literary works which he read. He makes notes in the Diary on every book he read, giving a longer or shorter account of its content, analysis of characters and technical execution, commenting on the work, giving his judgements and assessments, on the work itself as well as on its author and main characters. Apart from such reviews of literary works, Ivan is often present at different cultural events, concerts, opera, theatre, museums, art galleries, especially during his studies in Vienna, and he gives us a retrospection of all of that in his Diary, elaborating his impressions, comments and judgements. We now give a broader description of these two parts of Merz's Diary.

Personal part of the Diary

In the personal part of the Diary Merz notes down everything he was passing through, within himself and around him. However, he does not limit himself to mere descriptions of the intimate parts of his soul and the thoughts occupying his mind, but commits his reflections of the events surrounding him to the pages of his Diary: the daily ones from his immediate environment, as well as those from the broader social and political plane, which he witnessed and in which, to an extent, he participated, especially during World War I.

In the first months covered by the Diary, the topics related to school and his preparation for the graduation exam are predominant. He graduated from high school on 11 July 1914. Gradually, he began confiding to his Diary, writing down the states of his soul, listing the various problems, questions and doubts he was facing. Already on the first pages, actually at the very beginning of the Diary (*motto*) we find memories of his first boyish love which ended tragically through no fault of his own. This is a major chapter of young Ivan's life. He left us deep reflections and analyses of this topic. He was switching back to it for almost four years, until other values and contents started to take precedence in his soul.

Ivan was particularly interested in art and literature. The first words with which he begins his Diary are: *Evviva l'arte!* (long live art!). This was predominant in his spirit in the first years of his youth and student days. After the experience of war, it gradually recedes to the background, and Christian values take precedence. In Ivan's deliberations, we often encounter an affinity towards philosophy, i.e. a striving to find a final truth, a word which is often written in his Diary with capital "T". Initially, Goethe's *Faust* was a model which filled him with enthusiasm and which he often mentions and quotes in the Diary. With the passing of years, especially after the war, Ivan notices the drawbacks of Faust's world view. He comes to the realization that real truth is to be found only in Christian faith.

Religious thoughts and ideas are present in the pages of Ivan's Diary from its very beginning. The values of the Christian faith will take an increasing portion of his inner horizon until they become the focal point of his life. Related to this, a recurrent topic in the Diary is his striving for moral perfection, for the realization of a certain ideal. A careful examination of his life shows that God's grace was clearly at work in his soul, a force which gradually led him to Christian perfection. His prayers, invocations and sighs which he often records at the end of the day when completing the writing of a certain segment of the Diary are most touching. Ivan does not shy away from mentioning and analyzing his weaknesses, hesitations and wanderings. He was fighting for knowledge of real faith and for living a life according to Christian moral principles. These parts of the Diary are very interesting and they can especially help the young, by showing them how,

in spite of one's weaknesses, doubts and hesitations one can rise to the moral high ground and make a permanent value of one's life.

A special chapter in Ivan's life was his participation in World War I. Daily encounters with suffering, pain and death on the front lines clarified his view of the world. His thoughts on the battlefield, where he was in constant mortal danger, turn towards God, towards eternity. His descriptions of sincere trust in God's providence are touching. In mortal danger and other unpleasant situations, he strives to strengthen his faith in God who, he knows, loves him and is taking care of him.

A frequent topic of Ivan's deliberations is sin and encounter with sin, first of all within himself, and then in his environment. His reactions, particularly in his younger days, are imbued with a natural moral feeling which was later perfected by the principles of Christian morals in the light of which Ivan observes all human activity.

Reading his Diary, we see how Ivan got to know real life in all its facets, both positive and negative, including the most dramatic one – war. Firstly, this was realized within his family which was initially more liberal than Christian, followed by his experiences in the army and war, and finally during his studies in European cities. With this rich experience of life Merz, having developed himself in a religious and moral sense, could exert a deep and positive influence on human souls, especially those of younger people who, like him, were seeking the truth and permanent life values.

The literary part of the Diary – notebook for the books he read

Every time Ivan would read a book, he notes in his Diary firstly an account of its contents, longer or shorter, followed by an analysis according to certain criteria of his. The list or criteria according to which he analyzes literary works and which vary according to the nature of every particular work (novel, epic, drama, tragedy, lyrics, etc.) is very interesting. He himself lists these criteria in the Diary as follows: motive, content, types, details, milieu, idea, style, composition, characters, general character, psychology, technique of the work, external form, psychological detail, real detail. Works with a tragic content, especially dramas – tragedies he analyzes according to the following criteria: exposition, plot, culmination, problem, catastrophe.

Reading various works Merz encounters firstly their authors, followed by the main protagonists and other literary characters with whom he discusses and argues in the pages of his Diary. Especially interesting are his analyses, followed by critique and judgement of Goethe's *Faust*. Further on, in the works he read, Merz encounters different realities of life and situations which the authors describe; very often these are the contents and topics of love and sexuality, followed by different negative sides of human life. Merz gives his judgement on all of this, firstly from a literary-artistic viewpoint, followed by a moral-religious one.

As this is not a critical edition of Merz's Diary, the editor decided not to include the literary notebook in this edition of the Diary. This literary part relates to his profession – literature, the subject of his studies. It is not of a primary interest to a broad range of readers for whom this edition of the Diary is intended, as part of his Collected Works. The retelling of the contents of various works and texts, their literary analysis and a rendering of the main characters can be of interest only to the professionals in the field of literature or literary critics.⁵

However, we did leave in this edition some of his numerous accounts of the literary works which he read. At the end of each work Merz gives his assessment and comment, from the point of view of existential values and Christian world view. In these assessments

⁵ Although five doctoral dissertations have been written on Merz so far, and numerous other reflections of a smaller volume, the literary aspect of Merz's heritage has not been elaborated so far, and this part of his personality and profession still waits for its researcher.

and critical comments, we see him as he is, his philosophical and theological views and convictions, Christian truths and principles which are part of his being and according to which he judges every writer and his work. Though still young, Merz has a clearly developed religious and moral attitude in the light of which he observes and judges everything inside him and around him.

Political and social events find their reflection in the Diary

Merz's notes on political events and personalities, as well as on historic events in which he was a witness and participant are especially interesting. These comments are mainly incidental, but they are valuable because they inform us how certain historic political events found reflection in the population, how ordinary people reacted to them. The assassination in Sarajevo of the Crown Prince Ferdinand, an event which triggered World War I, made a particularly strong impression on Ivan and he dedicates a lot of space to it. His war Diary portrays in a vivid manner the dramatic situation on the battlefield, as well as in the country for whose interests he was obliged to fight; he follows the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, the creation of the artificial Yugoslav state under Serbian domination, etc. He was not happy with the creation of the new state after the end of the war, and he gives us his critical judgements on that. Later on in his Diary, Merz will frequently note his views on political and social developments. He makes acquaintances with some of the political personalities of his time (Korošec, Don Sturzo and other). As a student he attends political lectures and rallies and confides to his Diary his comments and judgements. (Here we find very interesting comments about communism, written after he attended the communist assembly in Zagreb on 25 January 1920. He also attended their meetings in Vienna on 18 April 1920 and 20 April 1920).

Commitment for his "favorite nation"

From the very beginning Ivan Merz wrote his Diary in the Croatian language. However, he often quotes from literature in German and French, and sometimes, especially from the booklet *The Imitation of Christ* also in Latin. We mainly translated these quotations into Croatian. Merz's mother tongue was German; at his home in Banja Luka he usually spoke German with his parents. However, after reaching the age of 17, he starts to write his Diary in Croatian and continues to write it in this language until the very end. His conscious commitment to belonging to the Croatian people and its culture found expression in the fact that the Diary was written in Croatian language. He often mentions his fondness and love of the Croatian people, "the dearest nation,"⁶ as he calls it in the initial pages of the Diary. It is precisely in the Diary that we can follow this process of his gradual and conscious assimilation in the Croatian national being. Particularly significant for this aspect was his visit to the tombs of the Counts of Zrinski and Frankopan during his stay at the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. He left us an impressive and emotional account from which it is transparent to what extent he identified with their ideas and how much he appreciated their sacrifice. Here is just one sentence from his comment: "Glory be to you, honest Croats! Even the heart of stone will weep when it sees such innocent men slain!"⁷

Saints are not born, you become one!

Ivan's Diary is one document more among a series of similar ones which illustrate the truth of a well-known saying: "Saints are not born, you become one" (it is with these words that a daily broadcast about the lives of saints celebrated on that day in liturgy and the calendar of the Catholic Church on the Croatian Catholic Radio begins). In Ivan's example, as he left us written so sincerely in his Diary, it is apparent how a saint is

⁶ Diary, 18 April 1914

⁷ Diary, 15 October 1914

created, how God's grace leads and encourages him, while he readily receives this inspiration using all the means to do what God wants of him. A lot of struggle was necessary to resist the temptations, to restrain his body and unhealthy leanings and finally, to claim victory, as the Diary testifies for us. This is what makes it so attractive to every believing Christian who can find in its pages an example of how success on the road of Christian sanctity is possible.

The Diary notebooks

Ivan Merz's Diary is not written in a single book, but encompasses 20 notebooks of various sizes and thickness. Such a way of writing was dictated by the circumstances in which Merz found himself during the studies and on the battlefield during the war. Below, we list the time period, as noted by Merz, in which each of the notebooks was written:

1. – 27 February 1914 until 15 October 1914 and from 24 October 1914 until 26 October 1914.
2. – 7 December 1914 until 16 March 1915.
3. – 17 March 1915 until 24 June 1915.
4. – 26 June 1915 until 28 October 1915.
5. – 12 November 1915 until 9 December 1915.
6. – 9 December 1915 until 28 February 1916.
7. – 7 March 1916 until 15 July 1916.
8. – 17 July 1916 until 28 December 1916.
9. – 31 March 1917 until 5 May 1917.
10. – 7 May 1917 until 22 July 1917.
11. – 9 September 1915 until 15 October 1917.
12. – 27 October 1917 until 25 December 1917.
13. – 27 January 1918 until 24 September 1918.
14. – 25 September 1918 until 21 November 1918.
15. – 23 November 1918 until 15 July 1919.
16. – 17 July 1919 until 6 February 1920.
17. – 22 February 1920 until 4 November 1921 and from 21 January until 27 March 1928.
18. – Pilgrimage to Lourdes from 21 until 28 August 1924.
19. – Stay in Argent (France) on 5 September 1924.
20. – Spiritual exercises 7 – 9 September 1923 and 27 – 29 March 1926.

Date, age and subtitles

As can be seen from the dates, Merz was not writing his Diary on a daily basis, but periodically. Whenever he was noting down something he wrote at the beginning of his note in the right corner the location and date. This notation varied from one notebook to another; sometimes he called months by their non-Croatian names: January, February, March etc. as was the custom at that time in Bosnia. For easier reference, we unified all the dates, and substituted the names of the months with Roman numerals. Occasionally Merz places an abbreviation of the day in the week when he wrote a particular entry, which adds additional coloring to the date routine. We left this notation of his, without adding the name of the day in other entries where Merz didn't place them.

After the date, we added in brackets the year and the month which refer to his age, i.e. from this notation it is visible how old he was at the time of writing a given text. We deemed this addition to be useful and important. It is interesting, namely, to compare the content and maturity of his thoughts and text with his age. It seems almost incredible that some texts were written by a young man aged eighteen, twenty, twenty-two. (See for instance the text on liturgy in the Diary written on 18 December 1918. Merz was then

twenty-two. The thoughts he put on paper almost prophetically were accepted and realized in the 2nd Vatican Council, 1962-1965!)

In one day Merz would regularly write about several distinct topics, without distinguishing them with special marks. In order to facilitate the reading and navigation in this richness of topics about which Ivan wrote and commented, we divided individual daily texts into smaller units and added editorial subtitles in *Italic* which are not present in Merz's original text.

The necessary linguistic interventions in this edition of the Diary

Croatian language in which Merz wrote his Diary is a language hundred years old, which was used at that time in speech and writing in Bosnia. In addition, he wrote it with the knowledge of the language as he learnt it in school and how he spoke with his colleagues in Banja Luka where he grew up and attended school. It is clear that such a form of Croatian, though understandable to us now, nevertheless differs significantly from the modern, standardized Croatian literary language and its orthography. Ivan had no intentions to publish his Diary during his lifetime, and consequently, didn't polish or embellish it in any way, but was writing spontaneously according to the level of knowledge of Croatian which he used at the time. In the first years, we see very frequently in the Diary notes the structure of sentences characteristic of the German language, with a verb at the end. This is a translation of the German means of expression, which he used in communication with his parents. Some of the words which Ivan uses in the Diary today have a different form. Very often he uses eastern linguistic varieties and means of expression, as was common for his period in Bosnia.

As this is not a critical edition of his Diary, but an edition whose primary aim is to enable the public to get to know his original thought in a most accessible way, we adapted his language to the modern literary language and harmonized it with current orthography. The eastern expressions were substituted with Croatian standards, and the syntax of the sentence is harmonized with Croatian syntax. Still, some of his readily understandable expressions we left as he wrote them in order to preserve some of the spirit of the time in which he lived.

In adapting and translation of old expressions and linguistic forms into modern expressions, we took meticulous care to preserve the original meaning of Merz's thought and to express with modern language exactly what he meant, wanted and wrote in the language of his day. I hope we succeeded in that.

Capital letters of some words

Although we applied modern Croatian orthography to this edition of the Diary, apart from the necessary linguistic corrections, some words or expressions were left, nevertheless, as Merz wrote them in his Diary. Specifically, this refers to capital letters with which he starts some words, although according to new orthography they should be written in lowercase. I quote only the most important ones: Truth, Life, Grace, Sacred Mass, Communion, Confession, Christianity, etc. With this manner of expression Ivan wanted to express his veneration towards the realities which these words denote, and at the same time, give an emphasis to what these realities meant for him as a person; for instance, in the first years of the Diary he expresses a pronounced striving to know the full truth about the world and life, and he often writes this word with a capital letter. By leaving the words as he has written them in his Diary, we wanted to draw attention to his inner understanding of these realities about which he is writing in the Diary.

Additions to the Diary – editor's introductions and other sources

In front of individual Diary units, depending on the location on which Merz was at the time of writing, we placed editorial introductory comments which are useful for a better understanding of his Diary notes from different periods. These introductions explain

the environment, circumstances and other accidental facts relating to Merz's life in its different periods, which enhances the reading experience of the Diary itself. However, along with the texts from the Diary, we deemed it necessary to add some other of Ivan's texts from the period of writing of the Diary. These are either some of his more important letters (e.g. from the battlefield), or texts written at a certain time (e.g. the text *New Age*), which were placed besides the Diary notes where they chronologically belong by the date of their writing. These texts fill the void at times when Ivan didn't write the Diary (e.g. the first months of 1917) or are important if we wish to gain a better insight into his intellectual profile and spiritual physiognomy which was developing at a given time. Here we wish to stress particularly his letters to Dr. Ljubo Maraković, letters to his friend N. Bilogrivić and especially interesting letters to his parents, especially to his mother from Paris. Although these letters will be published in a separate volume of Ivan's correspondence, we inserted them here in a chronological order, relative to the time of their writing, because with their sincerity and openness they complement and shed light on those parts of Ivan's soul and his thinking that we couldn't gather only from the Diary of that time.

In the Diary Ivan often quotes the thoughts of other people, writers, thinkers, saints, etc. which made a special impression upon him and found response in his soul. These are in the first place, quotations from the Bible and the booklet "*The Imitation of Christ*", sayings or verses of certain literary figures whose works he was reading; sometimes he quotes entire paragraphs or poems from these writers. Some of these quotations are in the language in which Ivan read them: German, French or Italian, sometimes even Latin. There are quite a lot of foreign words which Merz uses in the Diary, which are a consequence of his broad literary culture – the result of extensive companionship with world literature. We have left these as they originally appear or we have given a translation among the editorial notes.

Other texts of a diary character in the period from 1922 until 1928.

After the 4th of November 1921, Ivan couldn't keep the Diary any more. The end of the studies in Paris and gathering of materials for the dissertation, return to the homeland in the summer of 1922, employment as a teacher of foreign languages in the Archiepiscopal High School – all of that limited his free time and directed his attention towards more pressing, existential problems. Only in the last year of life, several months before his death, he wrote several precious pages which we placed at the end, where they also chronologically belong.

Although during that period Ivan did not officially keep a Diary, valuable documents are preserved written in a diary manner, from which we can reconstruct his spiritual profile in that period, and glance into his spirituality and ascent towards sanctity. We give the list of these documents in the introduction to the last period of his life which he spent in Zagreb, from 1922 until 1928, and then we publish them in full, chronologically as they were written.

Indices

At the end of the book the reader will find several indices. One is an index of the names of persons mentioned in the Diary, and another is an index of locations where Merz lived during his lifetime, especially during the war when he was frequently moved about. To this we added the index of literary works which he read, in two forms: in the chronological order in which he read a certain literary work, and then alphabetically, by the names of their writers. To this we added the index of writers which Merz compiled himself at the end of his dissertation on the influence of liturgy on French writers. Merz was reading these works mainly in Paris, but he didn't manage to keep a chronological record of them. Finally, we have a subject index encompassing key notions found in the

Diary. When we observe all the works which Merz read, we are amazed at their sheer number. In the first place this is an indicator not only of his desire for knowledge and artistic pleasure, but also for the finding of truth which he was looking for in books. Apart from being gifted in the arts, Merz had a leaning toward philosophy. By reading these works of art Merz gained a broad education, but he didn't find in them what he was looking for. When a question was put to him in a survey of how he would describe the impact on him of the novels which he read, Merz answered: "They vastly broadened my horizon (I only read works of literary value), but in them there is an emptiness regarding philosophical and theological truths."⁸

Acknowledgements

Finally, we wish to thank all who cooperated in the preparation of the publishing of the Bl. Ivan Merz's Diary.

Our heartfelt thanks are due to S. Marija Asumpta Strukar from the order of the Sisters of Our Lady with a seat in Zagreb. The Postulation of Ivan Merz asked her, through her mother superior, S. Beata Milašin who was member of the Commission for the preservation of the heritage of Ivan Merz, to type the entire Diary with a typewriter. Along with her other regular duties, she completed this huge task during 1971 and 1972. This typewritten manuscript had over 800 pages, and it was done in six copies, each of which was bound as books by Mrs. Katerina Borenić from Zagreb. We also thank Mrs. Jelena Berkeš and Dr. Biserka Grabar who supplemented the typed Diary with transcripts of German and French texts, which Merz cites in his Diary.

In the 1990s, when computers entered into broad use, the Diary had to be typed on a computer, in order to be amenable for further processing. This was done by the family of Dr. Vladimir and Beba Buljan from Banja Luka who, during the Homeland War stayed in Rome, in the Home of Croatian Pilgrims where, together with their children, students Katarina and Ivan, in the course of 1994 they entered the entire Diary into a computer, a task for which the Postulation is most sincerely thankful. Our further thanks goes to Mr. Darijo Blažević from Osijek, a co-worker of the Postulation, who made the necessary technical elaborations of the computer transcript and made it available for further use. When the preparation of the Diary for publication was under way, Mr. Ivan Zubac from Osijek and David Šimunković from Zagreb, another co-worker of the Postulation helped to check and correct the texts and compare them once again with the original. The publisher extends to them his sincere thanks. We also thank Prof. Dr. Ivan Macan, SJ, who translated into Croatian various German shorter or longer texts which Merz mentions in the Diary. Rebeka Šimunković also helped us with some of the translations. Finally, we thank Mrs. Anđa Jakovljević who did the language editing and Mr. Robert Borenić who graphically prepared the manuscript for publication.

It is our wish that this, to date the most complete edition of Ivan Merz's Diary, helps the reader to recognize, observing and following Merz's life path, the acts of God's grace in his/her life, the grace which stimulates in many ways each one of us, and calls us to a more perfect Christian life, so that, helped by the example of the Bl. Ivan Merz we might follow the path of Christian perfection which, by his own life, Ivan has illuminated for us.

Zagreb, 27 February 2014

100th Anniversary of the beginning of the Diary

*Božidar Nagy, SJ
Postulator*

⁸ See p. 470 in the printed edition of the Diary



BLESSED IVAN MERZ

1896 – 1928

A short biography

1896 – 1914 – Childhood and boyhood in Banja Luka. – Ivan Merz was born in Banja Luka on 16 December 1896. Here he began his education. He attended two years of elementary school in Prijedor, where his father, an Austrian officer and State Railways employee was assigned. In Banja Luka Ivan attended high school and graduated with the mark “excellent”. He grew up in a liberal environment and was always very interested in the arts and literature. In a religious and educational sense the greatest influence on him during his school years and university studies was his teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković.

1914 – In the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. – Following the desire of his parents, after completing high school he attended the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt near Vienna. However, after only three months spent there, he left, having realized that he lacked propensity and will for a military career. In spite of everything, he profited from the brief stint in the Military Academy in terms of acquiring life experience.

1915 – Beginning of the studies in Vienna. – Upon leaving the Academy, he enrolled at the Vienna University to study law. This period was marked by inner crises and searching, as is visible from his diary and correspondence. In the summer of the same year he was drafted into the army.

1916 – 1918 – In the blood and flames of World War I. – After completing an officer course, he was sent to the Italian battlefield and remained there until the end of the war. The experiences of the battlefield, where day-to-day he looked death in the eyes and was exposed to every type of hardship and suffering, deepened his faith and strengthened his Christian perception of the world. Religious values since that time took precedence in his life. This was a period of his spiritual ripening, a sincere turning towards God.

1919 – 1920 – Continuation of the studies in Vienna. – Upon the end of the war and with the consent of his parents, he finally began the study of literature, something he wanted to do since his high school days. He continued writing his diary whose pages became a precious document of his spiritual rising towards Christian sanctity.

1920 – 1922 – Study in Paris. – Supported by a Jesuit, Miroslav Vanino, he got a scholarship from a Catholic institution in France. The two-year stay in France and numerous contacts with Catholic intellectuals and converts broadened his cultural and religious horizons. He was especially interested in liturgy; he gathered material on this topic for his doctoral dissertation. This was for Merz a period of deep religious life full of asceticism and progress in the Christian faith. In a letter to his mother from Paris he says: “The Catholic faith is my vocation in life”.

1923 – Doctorate at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Zagreb. – He wrote his doctoral dissertation in French. Its title is: *The influence of liturgy on French writers from Chateaubriand until today*. This dissertation was published in Zagreb in 1996 on the 100th anniversary of his birth. In that same year, he took a life-long vow of chastity dedicating himself fully to Jesus Christ and the work for the advancement of his Kingdom. Having achieved the doctorate, he continued studies in Christian philosophy and theology privately among the Jesuits in Zagreb. He then went on to study all Church and pontifical documents of the last hundred years. The last several months of his life he dedicated to the studies of contemporary moral problems.

1922 – 1928 – An apostle of Croatian youth in Zagreb and Croatia. – Upon the completion of studies, he came to Zagreb in order to become a teacher of French and German in the Archiepiscopal Classical High School. He remained at this post until his death. During the six years he spent in Zagreb, he dedicated all of his free time to apostolic activity in Catholic youth organizations. He introduced into Croatia the Catholic Action of Pope Pius XI. He was one of the co-organizers of the Catholic organization called the Croatian Eagle Association in which he held the post of secretary. He gave the motto to this organization: SACRIFICE – EUCHARIST – APOSTOLATE. He was one of the most prominent promoters of the renewal of liturgy and Eucharist life in the Church in Croatia. He shone forth with his unrivalled example and zeal in the spreading of Christ’s kingdom in the souls of the people. He lived a saintly life filled with love towards his neighbors and heroically rose to the pinnacles of Christian perfection. Every year he performed spiritual exercises and wrote down the decisions which he dutifully carried out in his life. He wrote numerous articles, studies and brochures in which he left behind a rich intellectual and religious heritage. His main feature as a Catholic intellectual was loyalty to the Church and pope. He spread the love for the papacy in speech and writing and inserted it deeply in the souls of Croatian Catholics. It was written of him after his death that “although he never put on the cassock, he was the pillar of God’s Church”. He intended to establish an institution of Catholic lay persons, a secular institute, which would be fully dedicated to God and the apostolate. This idea of his was partly realized by his close co-worker Marica Stanković, who succeeded in establishing, ten years after his

death, the first female secular institute in the Church in Croatia under the name of “Association of Female Co-workers of Christ the King”.

10 May 1928 – Sacrifice for the youth – entry into eternity. Following an unsuccessful sinus surgery, he contracted meningitis and died on Thursday 10 May 1928 in a hospital in Zagreb. Before going to the hospital, aware that he would die, he left his testament in which, among other, he writes: “Died in the peace of Catholic faith. My life was Christ and death a prize to be won. I expect the mercy of the Lord and eternal possession of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. My soul has achieved the aim for which it was created”. On the death-bed he presented his life to God as a sacrifice for the Croatian youth. How much God appreciated this sacrifice is confirmed by the fact that his name became a program for the life and work of an entire generation of young Catholics. His saintly example and sacrifice bore abundant fruit, because many among his followers continued to put into practice his spiritual heritage, as is witnessed by the inscription from the wreath which the young placed on his tomb: “THANK YOU, EAGLE OF CHRIST, FOR SHOWING US THE WAY TO THE SUN”. His tomb is in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.

22 June 2003 – Beatification in Banja Luka. Pope John Paul II came to Banja Luka and raised Ivan Merz to the altar as a Blessed of the Catholic Church. In his speech, the Pope said, among other things:

“Today I give you Ivan Merz as a **witness** of Christ and **protector**, but at the same time the **companion** on the way in your history... From this day, he will be a **model** for the youth, an **example** for secular believers... The name of Ivan Merz meant for an entire generation of young Catholics a **program of life and work**. It must be the same today!”

2007 – Included among the 18 greatest saints of the Church! – Pope Benedict XVI in his apostolic exhortation about the Eucharist “*Sacramentum caritatis*”, published in 2007, included the Bl. Ivan Merz, as the only one of the Croatian leading spiritual figures, among the eighteen greatest saints of the Church, examples of the veneration of the Eucharist. This is another great acknowledgement of the sanctity of the Bl. Ivan, a tribute to the Church in Croatia and an additional motivation for us to get to know him and honor him as best as we can.

Scientific research of the life and work of Ivan Merz. – Apart from numerous high school graduations, seminars and diploma papers dedicated to Ivan Merz, a total of five doctoral dissertations were written about him. These are: 1. Marin Škarica: *Ivan Merz, the promoter of liturgical renewal in Croatia*, Rome, 1975 (in Italian); 2. Božidar Nagy: *Ivan Merz, a man of faith and educator for faith*, Rome, 1978 (in Italian); 3. Zdravko Matić: *Ivan Merz and the Catholic Action in Croatia*, Zagreb, 2005 (in Croatian); 4. Stjepan Ribić: *Faith and reason in the life and thought of Ivan Merz*, Rome, 2007 (in Italian); 5. Saša Ceraj: *Contribution of Dr. Ivan Merz and the Croatian Eagle Association to Croatian culture, particularly physical education*, Zagreb, 2013 (in Croatian).

Detailed information about the bl. Ivan Merz can be found on his official web site:

www.ivanmerz.hr

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN BANJA LUKA

1896 – 1914

Ivan Merz was born on 16 December 1896 in Banja Luka. His father, Mavro Merz, an officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army, by birth from Plzen (Bohemia) discharged in Banja Luka the duty of head of the railway station. His mother, Terezija Mersch originated from a Jewish merchant family which moved to Banja Luka from Velika Kaniža (Hungary). After Ivan's birth, the mother was baptized and converted to Catholic faith. Being the only child, Ivan was surrounded by a great parental love. His childhood and youth were carefree and happy. He received from his parents a decent urban upbringing, but without particular Christian foundations, because the parents, although Catholics, were not practicing believers. The result was that the young Ivan grew up in a liberal environment. Before starting school, he attended a kindergarten held by nuns, the Sisters of the Most Holy Blood. He began his elementary school in Banja Luka, but in the 2nd and 3rd grade he attended in Prijedor, where his father was temporarily assigned. He attended high school in Banja Luka, graduating in 1914.

Already in high school Ivan read a lot, especially the works of literary value. He took private lessons in French and English, as well as violin and piano. He also had a gift for drawing. He was active in sports. He played tennis, rode a bicycle, underwent physical training, played chess, went ice-skating, bowling.

A lay Catholic saved him for eternity

Especial merit for his religious orientation goes to his high school teacher, an exemplary Catholic layman, writer and literary critic, Dr. Ljubomir Maraković, an active member of the Croatian Catholic Movement. Through literature and arts, he directed Ivan towards moral and religious values. He was his true guide throughout his youth. Already in his mature age Ivan noted about him: "A lay Catholic saved me for eternity". Following the example of his teacher, Ivan later also chose the high school teaching profession.

Diary

Among the saintly personalities there are few whose spiritual life and rise towards God we can follow at such a close range as is the case with our Ivan Merz, thanks to his extensive Diary. He began writing the Diary at the end of high school, after Dr. Maraković gave his class an assignment to write an essay about the value of keeping a diary. Ivan was convinced that this was really useful, and so he started, as he said at the very beginning of the Diary. He was 17 when he began, and he kept his Diary all the way to his mature age. In it he described every flicker of his young heart, all the intellectual and moral storms he was going through in his process of growth; we can follow all his steps in the ascent towards life values and towards God. There are many young men who recognized themselves in the pages of his Diary.

As a motto of his Diary, Ivan took the verses from Byron's work *Manfred*. These verses, in which he found himself, apart from expressing a youthful idealism, have a prophetic line as well; they are the expression of a vague intuition of the mission which God's providence had in store for him. In a metaphorical way, they were entirely fulfilled in his later life. During his lifetime, and especially after death, Ivan permeated so many hearts with his own heart, his thoughts, ideals, his world view, showed to many "the way to the Sun", and now he truly "shines upon the peoples" from the altars of the Catholic churches as a blessed and future saint!

The experience of his first youthful love

In a family circle of prominent families in Banja Luka who regularly visited each other, the 16-year old Ivan met his age-mate, a girl named Greta Teschner. Very quickly love flared up, a love that for him was enchanting, ideal, his first and only love. It didn't last long, however, because Greta who, as a Protestant, had a very loose outlook on life, allowed herself to be seduced by a Muslim. When this man exploited and left her, in despair she poisoned herself in Travnik where her parents lived. It happened on 4 July 1913. The news of her death shook the young Ivan deeply, and he suffered for a long time. The memory of this first love was present for a long time in his soul, and found its reflection in his Diary where he often mentions Greta, but also critically analyzes this first love of his. "This love can be called ideal. How much solace do I get from the belief that I will see her again, the same, in body and soul."⁹ "When I found out about her death, there was a break in my soul, not at once, but with time. I find the only solace in art which I adore, and in nature."¹⁰ Here he himself hinted at one of the directions his soul will take after the break caused by Greta's death, and this is an orientation towards art for which he was especially gifted.

Esthetic Catholicism

"*Evviva l' arte!* – Long live the art!" Ivan put this exclamation on the front of the first volume of his Diary which follows his life from 27 February 1914 until 28 February 1915. The guiding thought of his spiritual life at that time was artistic infatuation and esthetic-literary world view. This world view and "poetry of life" were intertwined in him. Later on, shortly before he died, he described this period of his development as "esthetic Catholicism".

However, during the war Ivan began to be preoccupied by fundamental questions of the meaning of life, suffering, God, eternity, death, etc. Seeking the answers, he tried to find them in the literary works which he read. Ivan philosophized with the writers, trying to resolve the problems that dominated his mind and trying to take over some of their opinions. However, he declared at the end of his life, speaking about literary works, especially the novels he read: "They vastly broadened my horizon. I read only the works of literary value. But in them I found emptiness with regard to philosophical and theological truths."¹¹ He then went on to say how during the war, on the battlefield, and later in Vienna and especially in Paris, he "abandoned the esthetic-literary world view and started to observe life as it is in reality, that is in the Creator's concept".¹²

Ivan's origins and conscious declaration of belonging to the Croatian nation

Biologically, Ivan Merz was not of Croatian origin, although he had some Slavic blood in his veins, because his father's mother, i.e. his grandmother was Bohemian through her father, and her name was Lyudmila. The first language Ivan spoke, i.e. his mother tongue, was German and he mainly used it in communication with his parents. However, as he attended Croatian school, Ivan felt in himself an increasing affinity to the Croatian nation. It is especially important to stress that Ivan did not write his Diary in German, but in Croatian. In his Diary, an increasing enthusiasm for the Croatian nation is apparent, and in one place he calls it "his dearest nation". In him we can trace this gradual, conscious and emotional declaration of belonging to the Croatian nation, something which he formalized when in 1922 he accepted the citizenship of the state in which Croatia was incorporated at that time. Below we give a transcript of his certificate of citizenship from that year.

⁹ *Diary*, 9 March 1914

¹⁰ *Diary*, 16 March 1914

¹¹ B. NAGY, *Fighter from the White Mountains*, FTI, Zagreb, 1971, p. 271. (in Croatian)

¹² *As above*, p. 270.

Certificate of citizenship of Ivan Merz

Among the personal documents of Ivan Merz which are preserved, we find his certificate of citizenship, issued in Zagreb in 1922. The text of the certificate is as follows (in transcript):

THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND SLOVENES
Croatia and Slavonia, No. 34 – The free and royal capital city of Zagreb
CERTIFICATE OF CITIZENSHIP

by which

The City Government of the free and royal capital city of Zagreb
acknowledges that

Ivan Merz, student, born on 16 December 1896, in Banja Luka
from father Moritz-Mavro and mother Terezija nee Mersch
enjoys the right of residence in the City Municipality of Zagreb,
and is a full-fledged citizen of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Signed by his own hand: *Ivan Merz*.

In Zagreb, on 12 January 1922.

Signatures of the Government commissioner and City councilor.

Seal: City Government in Zagreb.

Dedicated his whole life to the Croatian people

Apart from having declared himself consciously, emotionally and formally (by documents) as a member of the Croatian nation, it is far more important what he did for the Croatian people, especially its youth. He dedicated everything he possessed – all his efforts, intellectual potential, his whole being, apostolate – to the upbringing of the Croatian youth and work in the spreading, strengthening and renewal of the Catholic faith among the Croatian people. His numerous papers, articles and studies illustrate how much he entered into the essence and soul of the Croatian people. Let us mention only some of the titles: Croatian Eagles and our Bishops, Catholicism and the Croatian People, True Love of the Homeland, Croatian Churches and many, many others.

Even at the end of his life, lying on his death-bed, but still conscious, Ivan dedicated to God his young life as a sacrifice for Croatian youth!¹³

It is therefore not surprising that the Croatian poet Milan Pavelić, SJ, in his poem *The Hunter of the Heart of Jesus* which was dedicated to our Ivan on the 10th anniversary of his death, in 1938, wrote the following verses:

Though not of our blood,
you are fully ours and the first among many
Croatia holds your bones, takes you as her program,
You wise and righteous man!

Catholic layman of European dimensions

Following Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013, the actuality of Ivan Merz in the European perspective becomes even more important. Starting with his biological origin in which several nations intersect, an even more important issue of his European personality is his education and formation in European cities where he studied. The Bl. Ivan Merz was born in Banja Luka, in Bosnia. He studied at European universities

¹³ Josip VRBANEK, *A Knight for Christ – Ivan Merz*, Zagreb, VKB and VKS 1943, p. 150–153. (in Croatian)

in Vienna and Paris, and his heart was turned towards Rome, the seat of Catholicism. He lived through World War I on the battlefield in northern Italy, and before that, received military training in Austria (Graz) and Slovenia (Slovenska Bistrica). During the war, he experienced a deep conversion to God. Having completed his studies, and having returned to Croatia, he dedicated all his life and work, and ultimately, the sacrifice of his life to the Christian upbringing of a Slavic, i.e. Croatian nation and its youth for which he presented to God on his death-bed his young life as a sacrifice! He was acquainted with and used ten European languages: Croatian, German, French, Italian, English, Spanish, Czech, Hungarian, Slovenian and Latin. Various German-Romanic-Slavic elements of European nations and cultures were unified in the Bl. Ivan Merz in a harmonious whole; we can justly say: “a unified Europe in one person” and all of it imbued with Catholic faith! Therefore the Bl. Merz as a layman of European dimensions who integrated within himself the elements of European nations and cultures by his origins, education, culture and saintly character surpasses the borders of his homeland; he is actually particularly important today when European unity is being built and should be built, as the St. Pope John Paul II often stressed, on the common Christian roots of European peoples.

DIARY

Banja Luka, 27 February 1914 - Banja Luka, 11 September 1914

Evviva l'arte!

Motto of the Diary:

I have had those earthly visions
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither -- it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies
Lies low but mighty still.

*Byron: Manfred (Act III, Scene with the Abbot)*¹⁴

This is my wreath, which I lay upon her grave.
To the holy and honorable memory of the first love,
which renewed me.



Banja Luka

¹⁴ This is Byron's original text. Merz wrote it in German translation.

Banja Luka, 27 February 1914 – (17 years and 2 months)

Motivation for writing the diary

Yesterday, on Thursday, we wrote a school paper on the “Value of keeping a diary”. Maraković clarified the great value of this, especially mentioning Goethe’s time in which the people were more preoccupied with the deeper issues of life. This is visible in many diaries; e.g. Lotta’s husband kept a diary, and we can therefore compare Werther’s letters with this diary. We find that almost all the facts match. During the lesson and throughout the day I reflected upon the idea of a diary and came to the conclusion that Ljuba¹⁵ is right – as always.



Ivan Merz – high school graduate

New findings in school lectures

In the religion class I found out from Dr. Pajić¹⁶ that in the 11th, 12th century, all the way to the 15th century, Bosnian knights were on the same cultural level with the knights of the West; actually, they were more intelligent because the majority of Bosnians were literate, while those in the West weren’t. I came to the conclusion that if the Turks hadn’t been here, God knows on what cultural level Bosnia would now be and God knows if central (southern) Europe would lag with its culture behind the West.

Reading in school the reflexive Vigny’s ballad *La mort du loup* I realized how pessimistic the French ought to be, when they say that you must fulfill a duty because of the duty itself, and not because of a reward; and when the moment of death comes, die stoically. Skok¹⁷ told us that Kant with his categorical imperative expresses the same

¹⁵ Dr. Ljubomir MARAKOVIĆ. Merz mentions him in the diary under three nicknames: Ljuba, Ljuban, Luban.

¹⁶ Dr. Petar PAJIĆ, priest, Ivan's religion teacher in high school.

¹⁷ Prof. Petar SKOK taught Merz philosophy and French. Having become a university professor in Zagreb, he was Merz's mentor in the writing and defence of the doctoral dissertation on the influence of liturgy on French writers.

thought. As I wanted to know more in detail what a categorical imperative is (I mainly know of Kant's idealistic philosophy which influenced Schiller's views on drama) I looked it up in Bazala's philosophy¹⁸, but this is written in such a scholarly manner that I couldn't find my way around. Reading Šrepel's *Russian Narrators*¹⁹ and having found out that Hegel and Schelling had a major influence on the thinking of Russian youth, I searched in Bazala for a precise account of these philosophers; again, I couldn't understand a thing, as a matter of fact the things I had known before are now cast into thick and incomprehensible phrases. Looking at Kant's philosophy I saw that by employing an enormous rationalism and roundabout ways he came to almost the same conclusions which Christ says in simple sentences.

Realism in Russia, Germany and among the Croats, as I saw, appeared due to absolutism: in Germany, it began with Heine, in Russia during Nikolai I and his absolutism. As only the aristocratic circles were described, and the patriots attacked them, they began to portray lower classes, and they were right, as Gogol did in *The Government Inspector* and *Taras Bulba*. In half an hour, I learnt half of the mechanics.

Banja Luka, 27 February 1914 – (17 years and 2 months)

Characteristics of various writers

Leinert²⁰ gave each one of us three questions from trigonometry. Of these 48 questions, everyone will get one on the graduation exam. Katović spoke about Kovačić, and just from listening I decided I didn't like him; he is too fantastically romantic. Luban tells me that Zola is no idealist; he portrays the peasant, the essence of a people, in loathsome words. His idealism lies only in the fact that he wanted to create a "*roman experimental*". Possibly. And is Ibsen an idealist? I think he is because, by uncovering the evil side of things he wishes to improve mankind. I read the story *Malin's Water* in *A Hunter's Sketches*.²¹ The atmosphere and landscape are stunning.

About Kranjčević and Michelangelo

In the Literary Society Kučinić gave a lecture on Kranjčević. It was detailed and the reception was good, but the presentation lacked French clarity. Luban knew Kranjčević in person and often told us details from his life, because Kranjčević lived with the Maraković family in Livno. He even possesses a manuscript of Kranjčević's serious historic drama. In the evening, I read a monograph about Michelangelo and found myself deeply impressed by that genius. My God, are there any people today whose ideal is art and who remain proper people? Michelangelo worked and suffered only in the service of art. Having done the Sistine Chapel, I think, he refused to receive any reward. I would love to see all those works of art with my own eyes. I become discontented when I am in a closed building, but when I go out into fresh air, I become cheerful, just as I am now. Good night.

Banja Luka, Monday, 2 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Reproach of conscience due to amusement during Lent

Yesterday evening I was on Kristalina. It was pretty amusing, but when I got back I remembered that it was Lent and that amusement should be avoided. One should obey spiritual authority, because without authority there is no accord.

¹⁸ Albert BAZALA, (1877 - 1947) Wrote the first *History of Philosophy* in Croatian language, in three volumes, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 1906, 1909, 1912.

¹⁹ [Milivoj ŠREPEL](#), *Russian Narrators*, Matica hrvatska, 1894 (in Croatian).

²⁰ LEINERT - teacher of mathematics in the Banja Luka High School

²¹ *A Hunter's Sketches* – collection of stories by I. S. Turgenyev

Instead of nationalism, the system of love; Serbs, Germans, Tolstoy

Yesterday I spoke with Milić. He's a good soul, but shallow – doesn't believe in God. His God is nationalism. He says religion is necessary for the common folk, but not for him. His system is based on a lie, and therefore cannot last long. Woe to the Serbs if they become like him. But, I don't think that this is so. Today Jarakula read some brochure about the Germans in Bosnia. The book is prejudiced, but contains a lot of truth. He quotes Haeckel's words where he says that Germans ought to conquer the Balkan peoples because they are incapable of cultural work. It is terrible and a shame for any cultured German to say something like that. Germans, like every other nation, aren't at all ideal, they are egoistical through and through. Tolstoy's system of love should prevail, and the form of the state should be as Italy once was. In that manner, we will achieve material and spiritual culture. This must be the ideal, and we must strive towards it, even if it is beyond reach. I am sorry that the Serbs as a nation which is waking up do not follow Tolstoy, but they feed themselves on extreme fanaticism by spreading such brochures.

Admiration for the universe

In physics, we spoke about the speed of light; it takes light from a certain star to reach us 8 – 10 – 25 – 250 years. God! How huge the universe is, everything twinkles, everything moves in perfect order. Everything is huge, immeasurably huge. The stars ride through space, burn and act, everything is immeasurable in this huge expanse; our earth also flies and turns like a crumb, and man on it is an imaginary, mathematical point and this man envies, bites and behaves arrogantly. What is a man? Nothing? This nothing, this mathematical point within a point, encompasses and sees the huge stage of the universe and even further – further! This matter which the man is made of is negligible, but nevertheless, so great. And this stage which he encompasses, this little crumb of a brain is capable of encompassing this whole universe, everything seen and unseen, heard and unheard. Who is the director of this theatre, who is this magnificent Spirit, which contains it all? It is Him.

About Raphael and his paintings

Since I was sleepy from the party, I only looked at Raphael's monograph. This artist above the artists gives to his paintings not only a beautiful color and perfect form, but his paintings are entire dramas and tragedies, the epic ballads of humanity. One such painting is "The School of Athens" which shows the debate between the greatest philosophers, Aristoteles and Plato about metaphysics, the debate of all of Greece, while Diogenes leasurly lies down on the stairs not caring about anything; he is an allegory of the bankruptcy of philosophy; a representative of the resentment of an over-ripened culture of the Greeks. (Aristoteles and Plato speak about the highest ideas, while at the same time being evil; therefore, it is below Diogenes' honor to occupy himself with philosophy.) There are beautiful Madonnas painted by Raphael, but one can find them in real life as well. The young Miss Franjić, the baker, is an image of the Madonna del Granduca²². I like her a lot. Yes, just yesterday, I read something about the plenarism and impressionism of Manet and I was thinking today whether this day and age can give birth to such artists as there were in the time of Renaissance. I am pessimistic.

The art of painting in Renaissance compared to present-day

At that time, all the painters were loyal to the same ideal, chose almost the same motifs, and the manner of painting was idealistic. Therefore, we do not find images of ugly people; every painting is a study, anatomical, optical, etc. Today, naturalism prevails in painting, but naturalistic paintings cannot be so elevated; secondly, motifs chosen by

²² Painting of the Madonna by Raphael Sanzio

present-day artists are much more varied than before. The painting of Renaissance is pretty one-sided, it developed in the direction of the Antique and Christianity and reached perfection; but today, the subject-matter²³ is so varied that perfection is impossible to reach. Political and financial circumstances were different during Renaissance. The popes and rich families were assisting the painters and the painters competed with each other and strived towards ever greater tasks, but the situation today is an enemy of the arts. Militarism and political constellation are destroying the material power of rotten Europe. The artists work for money, not for the art. There are exceptions, of course, but the political constellation does not support them morally in their work, as was the case once in Florence. (The competition between Michelangelo and Leonardo in painting was like a military campaign.)

Banja Luka, 3 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

School and literary topics

Leinert gave us a light descriptive example, but none of us could move an inch. “A good sign”. I finished the duck with pastels. It came out rather good. Skok gave me Fleury’s *History of the French Literature*, a book written for Russian pupils. It is not superb, more a textbook²⁴ than a scientific book, and as it was written for Russian pupils, it contains only a few lines about Zola; actually, it doesn’t say anything at all about the Rougon-Macquart lineage.²⁵ It doesn’t speak about the stoic and pessimistic ideas of Vigny (Kantian), etc. I read some stories from Turgenev’s *A Hunter’s Sketches* – a description of the night, a bright night sprinkled with stars which “compete in twinkling” is magnificent in Bezhin Meadow.

Six of us went today to eat some bread rolls, and we had a good laugh. Jarakula took a lead in making disorder.²⁶ Her hair is chestnut brown.

Banja Luka, 4 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

The issue of conscience in a pupil's adventure of stealing graduation topics

Today I had a good night’s sleep and didn’t go to school. I didn’t miss a thing. In the afternoon, I took my Croatian literature to be bound and spent an afternoon searching for old pages from literature. For an hour, I played the piano. I leafed through and read a bit from Fleury’s history. In the evening my companions wanted to stage a “raid” on the high school²⁷, to see whether the graduation assignments are known yet. We should be able to get hold of the descriptive examples, because it is not our fault that Leinert wasn’t working with us. Is it a theft? It is. I will try to keep aside; anyhow Leinert will give us a hint on what the examples will be. It is robbery to try to steal Luban’s assignments. Luban is not going to ruin any of us anyhow, because he likes us and because we know. To cheat him like that, him who is our benefactor, who pulled us from the mire of ignorance – is simply mean. Where is the conscience of these people? Anybody can complete the Croatian assignment because it is rare for anyone to get a negative mark, and he will give us a nice topic which we know. There are some poor “Germans”²⁸ among us (Bijelić, Bursić, Mujagić, Katović, Kučinić, Seferović, Šerbetić) and I am not surprised they want

²³ In the original he uses the French word: *sujet*

²⁴ In the original he uses the German word “Nachschlagebuch”

²⁵ Rougon-Macquart – a general name for all twenty novels by Emile Zola tied together by genealogy and inheritance of the main characters from the same novels.

²⁶ Here he uses the old Bosnian expression meaning “to create disorder”

²⁷ The Technical High School which Merz attended

²⁸ “Germans” – Merz’s colleagues who were not well versed in the German language for the needs of the school and needed help

to know what the assignment will be. It would be good to ask Luban to tell us roughly what the assignment will be.

Banja Luka, 5 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Resolution of the problem of conscience related to the break-in in the teachers' room

Motto: My peace is gone, My heart is sore: I'll find it, never, Oh, nevermore.. (Goethe).²⁹

Today my companions made a circle where we all signed so that, in case our burglary is found out, we shall all be guilty. Was I right in having placed my signature? The issue is pressing down on me. As a colleague, I am obliged to help, but am I obliged to support such a misery and laziness that I must resort to stealing? They always speak about the nation, character and honesty, shout at the careerists, and they are the same all the way. If they were objective – which they are not – they would realize that the honest way is the best way. During these four months of diligent work they could achieve everything. To arrive at the graduation certificate, i.e. to a greater honor, in such a way is careerism; in the same way in which a lowly person flatters his superior for the purpose of advancing his career, what they are doing is just the same. They say it is a pupils' adventure; I am also in favour of adventures, I am not a coward, but honesty prevails above all. In case we are caught, and we lose our daily bread, I sinned gravely against my parents, I committed a robbery. Which duty comes first, towards the colleagues or parents? Surely, towards the parents. Secondly, I love my parents a million times more than my colleagues. Therefore, I did the wrong thing having placed my signature there. I will try to resolve this issue in a way that those of us who know the school work well write the graduation papers for the other ones first, before writing it for ourselves. Thus, we would fulfil the collegial duty. I cannot fathom these people, they are so ruthless, to make some of us break our necks because of their extreme laziness. And for these people, every second word is nation! God, forgive me if I sinned. I know that honesty and consistency³⁰ is holier for me than anything else. I will try to mend everything. Please, God, give me the strength!

Banja Luka, 6 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Hesitation and seeking solution of a moral issue

Today we made a plan of our roles during the break-in. Everything is romantic and attractive, but when I thought in retrospect and realized I could be thrown out of the school, I restrained myself; on further reflection, I realized there are miserable souls as for instance Burzić, who are waiting for their daily bread to be able to support their mothers. In that case, I am willing to sacrifice myself. Bürger keeps to the principle *vox populi, vox Dei*³¹; therefore, one is allowed to kill the tyrant. The same, he says is here: graduation exam, as the whole world attests, is a stupidity and we are not to be blamed if someone doesn't pass. Our school system is unhygienic, our school books are no good, and it all results in us being physical morons, unable to do any useful work. Graduation is a stupidity and as long as this school system will be as it is, we have the right to help ourselves in other ways. We have chosen this way and we hope we shall not be caught.

²⁹ Merz quotes this verse from Goethe's *Faust* in his Diary in German: „Meine Ruh ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer, ich finde sie nimmer und nimmer mehr.“ (1st part, Gretchen by the spinning-wheel, alone). With this verse, Merz wanted to express his inner turmoil and pangs of conscience with regard to the pupils' adventure.

³⁰ In the Diary the word used is consequence

³¹ Latin: voice of the people, voice of God

But still, there is a doubt in me that I am committing evil, and now when I go to confession, I should reveal it to the priest, but not in a way to make the whole thing public. I will simply tear up the questions and face the exam with clear conscience, and on the issue of why I placed my signature, I was helping the others who are doing this because they are the consequence of a bad school system. God, did I do well? Enlighten me!

She has a small face, fair, with a touch of blush. She is truly beautiful.

Banja Luka, 7 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Further preparations for the “raid” on the school

Today I am completely at peace. I see it is a good deed what I am doing, otherwise it is purely romantic. We procured the electric lamps. We distributed our functions. Tonight several of them are going (Kurtagić, Zelenika, Seid, Bursić, König, Kulenović, Debossens). I will not receive the questions. The whole thing is interesting, one could say together with Turgenev: “The dear reader will wonder if I tell him that breaking into a safe at night can be an honourable act. This is how...”

Yesterday and today I read some stories from *A Hunter's Sketches*. In the evening the “Gospodska” street was full. An Italian beggar without one leg and a black pointed beard was most aggressive and shouted “Good evening” at everybody. He played Weige, the Italian pieces beautifully. Harmony and warmth of Italian melodies make a man beatified and if you close your eyes, you think you are strolling through Venice, while a warm breeze blows from the sea. A pleasant feeling in my soul.

Banja Luka, 8 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Impressions after reading various works

The day before yesterday I read *Der verlorene Sohn* by Paul Heipe, and today Mörik's *Mozarts Reise nach Prag*. This last novel is a master-piece, giving an extraordinarily good description of Mozart, and to an extent, his works. *Der verlorene Sohn* is a rather interesting work, but too romantic, striving for effect and lacking in psychology. Along with that, today I also read Turgenev's *Death (from A Hunter's Sketches)*, a story which shows how the Russians die without fear. Tolstoy proved this having said that death is a law of nature, and people who didn't distance themselves from nature die easily.

Daily events from school

My friends conducted a “raid” on the teachers' room. Some say they got frightened, because the echo is loud, and those who kept guard were so frightened they holed up in a channel. They found Luban's diary, but didn't bother to read it. Otherwise, they found nothing. I must always think of the good Greta, how she was coming to visit the Bojković family and how she played merrily. I will write more about her some other time. In the evening, I found out that Stiks's father wanted to strangle his son for courting a beautiful Polish girl. She loves Stiks and cries when he is not around, and Stiks is contemplating leaving home. She is willing to provide for his education. If Stiks's father knew what a member of a Croatian Catholic organization is, he would be happy.

In the evening, I was looking at the moonlight and the clear sky. Everything was silvery and the stars competed with each other in twinkling. God, what a beauty nature is!

Banja Luka, 9 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Memories of Greta and the first love

Tonight, I dreamt about Travnik. I was there, looking for her (Greta's) apartment. When I woke, her image was hovering in front of my eyes and I saw us together how we went from her house into the store. She was cheerful in short sleeves and home dress. She was happy. She is here no more, her body is gone, but memories remain. God, forgive her soul. My intuition of why she committed suicide is psychologically elaborated. Whenever I think of her, I think of a girl of flesh – with an erotic appeal. The world looked upon her with such eyes only, and she also behaved openly, feeding this image about herself. But, the stupid world didn't know her as a sincere girl of good heart, and, along with that, naturally gifted, well-read and much smarter than her colleagues. In Travnik she didn't find anyone who understands her and was unhappy without knowing why. While she was here, she loved me because she knew I was not only seeing her as a woman, but a personality and she called me her friend. Our spiritual relationship was based – I can say this with certainty – looking from a distance now – on a basis which was not merely erotic. On every step when we were alone we kissed. I was telling her – and myself: I am kissing only her and I would seek no other... She was always morally stonger than me and she restrained herself. If she would come to life now, I wouldn't do the same any more, but God knows if such a love would have flared up within me if it hadn't been created in this erotic way. The Sacred Scripture nicely says that Platonic love doesn't exist, that this is connected to the love of the body and a unique girl's soul. This love may be called ideal. I lived my young days with her – unique, there is none like her in the world, and I remember her appearance with sadness; it lies heavily on my heart when I conjure up her image and temperament and think it was all dust and is gone. I get a lot of solace from the belief that I will see her again – in body and soul. There is no woman similar to her, and therefore I suppress every deeper feeling which appears in the soul towards any other woman. I suppress it in the very germ. The purpose – the ideal – for my life would be to give a good example and to contribute my part to idealism in this “mechanical age of technology”. I will write more about Greta and my inner transformation on another occasion.



Greta Teschner 1896 – 1913

I read something of Turgenev; an especially beautiful story called *Meeting* where a girl sincerely loves a bully. The story (from *A Hunter's Sketches*) portrays a man without much intelligence living in a village. Here he lost his darling, went to a big city and

became enthusiastic especially for drama. He loves *Hamlet* because he expresses emotions about death (“to die – to sleep”), just like he himself feels.

Banja Luka, 11 March 1914. – (17 years and 3 months)

Instructions for understanding Wagner's dramas

Yesterday I couldn't write, as we were moving out (from the Pajićs' to the railway station). Luban was telling us something about R. Wagner saying that he is a phenomenon and that there mustn't be an intelligent man who doesn't know that. His musical dramas (not operas) unfold as every other drama, and the music also unfolds in a dramatic way. Before going to the opera to watch one of his pieces, you must first learn the motifs of the music and you must know the content, because otherwise it is impossible to follow the musical pictures, development of the drama, theatrical pictures, dance and other arts which Wagner put together. It is pity that Skok doesn't tell us about French literature in the way Luban does; if it weren't for my own interest, I wouldn't know even the little amount that I do know.

A review of Turgenev's A Hunter's Sketches

I read *A Hunter's Sketches*. The landscape and outline of Russian conditions are superb. It occurred to me that perhaps Turgenev, just like Montesquieu (*Lettres persanes*), wanted to tell about the conditions in his country; but Montesquieu criticized the conditions of his country, while Turgenev describes both the good and evil sides with love. Turgenev didn't probe the most intimate lives of ordinary peasants because he didn't live with them, but nevertheless the image of Russian peasantry came out magnificently, the writer illustrated it as it might have been perceived by a diligent nobleman – a hunter. He describes the corruption of supervisors, the misery of peasants, religiously-stupid nervousness of the noble ladies, Russian bandits and their good nature (*The Rattling of Wheels*), the life of conceited bankrupt aristocrats full of selfishness. They are all generally good people. We see a Gypsy woman and a girl (*The Tryst*); both of these stories bring out the essential later traits of Turgenev – the superiority and greater strength of women than that of men. This is how the life and nature of the Russians is described and one should not be surprised that the Russian Prince, having ascended to the throne, having read the stories from *A Hunter's Sketches* gave Russians freedom, seeing that, although they are not cultured, they are all intelligent and politically mature. I only find it strange that Turgenev did not describe the wonders of a Russian winter (at the end there are only a few notes about winter); because winter is the main characteristic of Russian nature. In that respect, we can say that Wereseagan continued after Turgenev portraying Russian winter in a realistic manner.

When I read this, I ask myself why am I reading; I am overcome by some ill feeling, and after so much work and knowledge, I haven't found any pleasure.

Banja Luka, Thursday 12 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

New insights in school lectures

In physics we spoke about various optic illusions and unheard-of things. Debossens spoke about Kumičić giving proof that such a great historic writer as Šenoa and his characters are merely present-day people only wearing historical masks. So, he wasn't able to guess the historic *milieu*.³² He is not plastic, etc.

³² Milieu (French) - middle, environment. Merz uses this word in French often in the Diary.

What Goethe believes in

With *Faust*, we came to the “*Katekizationscene*” and it proceeds from this that Faust is a pantheist; under the influence of Spizova’s writing Goethe professed pantheism. However, in my opinion this is not pure pantheism, but carries a large share of skepticism. When he speaks about God, he says: “Who dares to invoke him, who dares to profess him: do I believe in him?”, and then the sceptic raises his head and says: “Yet who, in feeling, self-revealing, says: ‘I don’t believe’?”³³ Therefore, Faust himself doesn't know whether he believes in Him or not, but he, with his enthusiasm for nature sees in her something immeasurable, every part of her is something perfect, it is God; therefore he is a pantheist, with an admixture of scepticism, because “maybe he believes otherwise”. It is certain that he believes in a Higher Being, which he calls the all-embracing One.³⁴

I was a magician at “Reta’s”, listened to ventriloquism³⁵ and watched the Negro dance. The rest was stupidity. I ended the notes about *A Hunter’s Sketches* and *Mozart’s Travel to Prag*. All in all, it was a troublesome day, I didn’t have any deeper spiritual pleasure, actually I didn’t even walk.

Banja Luka, 13 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

An overview of literary works he reads and about which he learns

Dr. Pajić was telling us that the Sistine Chapel is dark and looking at it you might break your neck. Strange how coldly he speaks about these works of art.

We read *Moïse* by Vigny in French. This is a poem rarely found in world literature. The motif was present in many romantics: “A misunderstood genius”. The same is here. Moses is a man who knows all, to whom the stars bow, whom the seas obey, who leads the stray peoples on the right way. He is so great, he knows everything that is about to happen. For that reason, the people do not accept him as one of them, do not understand him, fear him, but do not love him. Of what use is all his knowledge when he has no desires and therefore cannot be happy. For this reason, he asks God to make him an ordinary mortal with wishes and hopes. Here he disappears. As we see, Vigny is not a great philosopher, because Moses would find pleasure in this permanent vision of God and the return and betterment of his people. But the poem is not completely devoid of ideas. It tells us this: if mankind would achieve everything it wishes, life wouldn’t have any fascination anymore and people would be unhappy. Therefore, Moses is here more a representative of humanity than of a misunderstood genius. A particular beauty of this poem is in the landscape and the grandiose biblical figure of Moses which is embodied in Michelangelo’s huge statue.

In *Faust* I discovered a slight difference in characterization. At the beginning, Faust recognizes the *Erdgeist* as a collective being, as an allegory of nature, and in “*Katekisationscene*” he is a pantheist who sees the Godhead in every detail. Both are in a logical contradiction, but not a contradiction of ideas. Faust believes in the spirit of nature, but in “*Katekisationscene*”³⁶ he doubts: does he exist or not, while in the “*Erdgeistscene*”³⁷ he calls him, signalling that he believes in him.

I started reading *Eugenie Grandet* and I see that my French is too poor to read it without a dictionary. This makes me waste time without finding out anything new; therefore, I think I will start learning French in order to know it thoroughly.

³³ Goethe, *Faust*, (1st part, Martha’s garden, scene of Faust and Margaret)

³⁴ German: Allerhalter, Allumfasser

³⁵ Speech from the stomach

³⁶ Catechisation scene in *Faust*

³⁷ Scene with the Spirit of the Earth, in *Faust*

I read several of Dante's chants. I like him a lot, only it is a pity that the translation is so bad. One ought to learn Italian, Italian verses must be as beautiful as *Faust* is. Mother is always angry and reprimands me because of what I am doing.

Banja Luka, 16 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Impressions from school and from a concert

Dad was a bit annoyed at the repetition of physics, and Nikica doesn't know much chemistry and is easy to deceive. My notebook from Croatian literature is pretty much in order now, I only lack what Ljuba spoke about *Osman*. We continue to repeat mathematics, but without any progress. Yesterday evening "Nadimah" gave a party and the opera singer Dida Fritz was performing. She has a most beautiful voice, sings high, especially pleasantly performs the thrillers and one has the impression of a bird singing. Her brother is a cello virtuoso. He was playing some nice pieces, but he is not in the class of artists such as Stano. He looks like Ćefo, thin, pale, with long hair which falls upon the forehead in the manner of a genius, a true artist. When he plays the piano, he makes the movements of a virtuoso, but one can see he doesn't understand art as he ought to; it is more of a pose for him, whereas some time ago when Stano was playing, one could feel the breath of an artist who gives his whole feeling to the strings and performs those gloomy variations. Miss Latas played Chopin's g-minor and I wanted to identify myself with this music, but couldn't because she wasn't playing with feeling (she was nervous). I came home at 11, in order to be able to go to church.

On Dante and Goethe

I continued reading some more of Dante's chants. His plastic is brilliant and it is interesting what kind of punishment he assigns for particular sins, e.g. he places those who out of nonchalance didn't either believe or disbelieve in God in the fore-hell together with angels who were indifferent in the fight between God and Lucifer. He explains that they did not deserve evil, i.e. to go to hell as they were not against God, but they have no merits which could take them to heaven, because they were not in favour of God either. In this fore-hell they are stung and bitten by bees. The adulterers fly around in wind and somersault, while the gluttons devour mud and swim in it. The founders of new sects cannot find peace in the grave, and their desires tie them to this world.

I read *Goethe in Old Age*³⁸ (Volksbuch der Literatur). Goethe is a rather interesting person, but the book is not nicely written. He used to fall in love from moment to moment, took care of his Vulpis and was almost always discontented. This left him only when he fell in love with Marianne Willemerer. It is interesting how he inspired her to sing songs as beautiful as his. After many years, before his death, when he saw her letters, he wrote: "In front of my Lady's eyes, with her fingers it was written long time ago, with the upmost desire, as it was expected and in that way accepted, close to the bosom from where they started to grow, let them travel always kindly ready, the witnesses of glorious time." These beautiful verses match my feelings today.

Memories of Greta and the first love

I was looking for her picture among the photographs, I wanted to see her, to...?, but I couldn't find it, mother must have put it away someplace. I was sad. Today the sky is overcast and I remember that on such a day, in spring if I am not mistaken, she came with her parents and Captain W. to us to the old railway station. König was there too and we played social games. It was joyful, and when my turn came to count the stars – I kissed her, the first time I kissed a woman. I was hesitating, but I was happy nevertheless. I

³⁸ German: Goethe im Alter

didn't behave most gallantly towards her, although I have always loved her. For instance, she offered me a drink – I didn't take it. When I drank, she drank from the same part of the glass. She used to come many times. Once she came and she was in the small room at the old railway station, and there were also Plach, König and Mikler. We were having good fun. She was sitting on a sofa, crossing her legs, so that most of her legs could be seen. God, it's true, it attracted me then. One couldn't imagine Greta without it. She loved me so much, she did whatever I wanted. In the wagon compartment, we kissed and held each other for a long time. We rode many times in a horse carriage, I waited for her every day after school, escorted her home, getting a kiss at the door. The entire relationship with her is interlaced with kisses. But when I got back from Travnik, I already realized that man is not only the body. I asked myself whether I had done the right thing, and when I found out about her death, an emotional break occurred in my soul, not at once, but with time. But again, I ask myself – if there hadn't been for the material side, would the meeting of souls ever occur? With kisses our souls were bound together. She is dead, I will never see her again, her who was my solace in life and I wish from the bottom of my heart to see her There, in the other world. I cannot express what I feel for her, only my tears are running whenever I imagine the pretty, noble and good-natured German woman. It seems to me that my youth has gone with her into the grave; everyone can laugh from the bottom of their hearts, I cannot. I look at girls, I like them, but whenever I think of her, everything else vanishes. I find my only solace in art which I am passionate about, and in nature.

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 18 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Impressions from school lectures

Yesterday we had a test in mathematics. I didn't complete it and so I didn't hand it over. The whole afternoon I was putting my literary notebooks in order. When I read some lines, I realized how wrong I had been before: therefore, I saw that I had advanced. I lost the entire afternoon on that, and therefore in the evening I was angry and in a bad mood.

Today was another stupid day. In philosophy class, we learnt that one can forget in a single moment certain languages or letters or anything else (in reading and writing). It means, there was a disruption in a part of the brain. As every person can learn many languages and other things, it means there is a space in our brain dedicated to that. Therefore, one's head is a whole universe where everything that exists can be lined up. Maraković gave us homework. I thought he had exhausted all the beautiful topics, and now I see once again that he gave us a wonderful homework: "Optimism and pessimism in the champions of Croatian and Serbian literature". I will come to this matter again later.

On the need of reform of the priestly rank

This evening I spoke with Plach about our priests and came to the conclusion that they must reform themselves, in a way to have two schools for priests: higher and lower. In the lower school, they would prepare themselves for educating people, as has been proven rather successful among the Serbs, while in the higher school priests would be educated who would address the intelligentsia. Theological faculties should be in big cities, not in small ones like Sarajevo; here they would have the opportunity to get to know and to mingle among the intelligentsia. This school could last even seven years, and the greatest attention should be given to art. People who would graduate from such schools would be above the level of ordinary intellectuals and would be able to make an impression upon the young people with their knowledge and in such a way win their minds for their cause.

I read a little today: only *Tannhäuser* (Wagner's). The verses are beautiful, but the plot, as it seems, is not lively enough. Ideas are brilliant. I will write about it in my literature notebook.

Banja Luka, 21 March 1914, 3 p.m. – (17 years and 3 months)

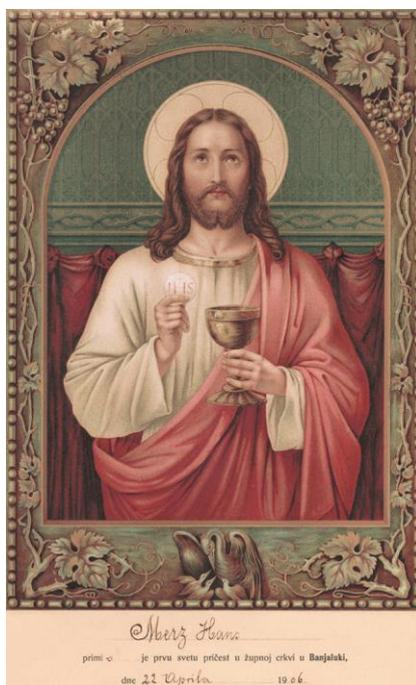
Daily events among the friends and in the house

It is the first day of spring. Strong wind is blowing and whistling. It is strange that such a mild season has such power as its precursor. Nature loves contrasts. The day before yesterday Bürger told me I was egoistic for not having given a coin to the little König. At that moment, it infuriated me terribly, because I always strive to be better, I criticize my own behavior, and he came and told me this.

Yesterday mother was very angry because of the housemaid, and she poured out all her anger at dad and me. It was hard for me to listen to it and I couldn't do what I had planned to, namely, to write the diary and contents of *Manfred*. Therefore, just after lunch I sat down and wrote the contents of *Manfred*, and now I am writing the diary.

Impressions about the works Tannhäuser and Manfred

I wrote my impression about *Tannhäuser* already; I can only judge the character of the work when I read it the second time. *Tannhäuser* is an embodiment of the transition of poets from the Antique toward the Christian era. The musical impression must be brilliant. This is how I imagine it: when he left Venus, the music must be terrific, because you need enormous power of will to leave the world of the senses. Further on, when Elisabeth saved Tannhäuser, the music must weep too, thus showing Tannhäuser's soul which realizes that his view is unjust and that love is a delight.



Memorial picture from Ivan's first Holy Communion which he received on 22 April 1906, and which he kept above his desk for his whole life. This picture is presently kept in his museum in Zagreb.

Manfred is a hardly understandable work, but one can get a good picture of Manfred's character. He is a pessimist, a man of *Weltschmerz*³⁹ who knows a lot, and despairs over the destiny of man who is neither God, nor a mere speck of dust, either. I would like to read something today about Veselinović and Byron's *Cain*, because Luban gave us an assignment: "Optimism and pessimism in the champions of Croatian and Serbian literature". Kozarac, Đalski, Lazarević, Veselinović should be taken into account.

Banja Luka, 25 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Confession and Communion which is the source of life

I read *Cain*. It lags far behind *Manfred* because it doesn't have so many of the general human thoughts. I completed the Croatian homework. Yesterday I went to confession and got 7 Our Fathers, 7 Hail Mary's and 7 Glory Be's. Today I was looking forward to Communion and I tried to convince myself – there is a tinge of skepticism in me – that I am receiving God who out of love for frail mankind gave Himself as solace and food. Communion is the source of life.

Otherwise, I am working only a little, because I don't have the willpower, nor the books that I want. I am experimenting with electricity. I would love to read *Eugenie Grandet*, but it's a pity I don't have the translation. The Officers' library has no good books at all. How could it, as they are all stupid.

Banja Luka, 27 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Impressions from a party

Yesterday evening it was the town ladies' amusement evening⁴⁰. I went, although it is Lent, not to amuse myself, but for artistic pleasure. Hollaus wonderfully sang *Das Grab auf der Haide*, and the older of the Vrinjanin sisters played Chopin's *Polonaise* very well. Bajer played on the violin a piece by Berens, and Mr. Bajer nicely performed some German and Polish guitar songs, and one which, it seems, he put together himself and which has a refrain: "I don't know, I swear to g...". Captain Schulhof made good drawings by coal, various characters, and Lora Konovsky composed the poem *Opposition* in which she requires that women may also come to the *Sippung*.⁴¹ Dad retorted well having told her that if they were always on the *Sippung* they would be opposition just as they are on rare town ladies' amusement evenings. They can come only rarely so it has a greater charm for them. This is mainly all, and the musical pieces were the best. People have the motto "Art", but there were many really stupid things, just as there were the lustful ones. I was there for two hours and therefore I didn't go to school today. I missed only civics. They say he was explaining a lot.

³⁹ *Weltschmerz* ([German](#)) – world-weariness. A popular expression introduced by the German writer Jean Paul, linked to the romantics from the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. Became widely accepted also on the part of the so-called "lay masses". This is a term which denoted a collective feeling of sadness and helplessness which at that time took over thousands of young people, mostly artists and intellectuals. It is a sentimental feeling of a whole generation, and it was their reaction (and expression of helplessness) in front of evil, injustice and lack of meaning which, as it seemed to them, marked the world they live in. Young people, usually under the influence of poetry, were veritable victims of "world-weariness" and frequently resolved it in the worst and simplest possible way – by suicide.

⁴⁰ German: Burgfrauenabend

⁴¹ *Sippung* – a meeting of the members of the German minority in which friendships are cultivated, along with presentations of art and humor. It started in Prague in 1859.

World views from literature

There was also a German homework: *What do we learn from Realism in literature*. The guiding thought: we get acquainted with social conditions, strivings of the people and parties and the poet concludes who is capable of further work and who isn't. Yesterday and today I read Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost* and other stories. He is a *l'art pour l'art*⁴² writer and that's why some of his things cannot be precisely understood. The language and description (especially in *Fisherman and his Soul*) are nice and he composes his landscapes all with the animal kingdom.

Justice is my ideal!

Zelenika asked me why I am going into the Academy when I am against war and when I have no national ideals. My ideal is justice and maybe I will die as its victim. The present era is one giant contrasts. Some become liberated of their yoke, and others are being enslaved. I cannot be a German, because they enslaved the Slavs, and I am not a Slav. I intend to be a teacher and educate better Germans in order not to be as fanatical as they are now. Long live Tolstoy!

Banja Luka, 28 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

Events related to school, visit to the cinema

We had a repetition today of physics (aerodynamics), also something in mathematics (trigonometrics – practical example). Almost all of us were involved in the repetition of Croatian literature. I read Wilde's *Salome*. It's Wilde's work at the first glance, a tragedy without a plot.

Đorđević gave a lecture in the Literary Society about Ilić. This guy was a Eurodemon, if this is what he is called, the good spirit who searched for paradise on earth and therefore he celebrated the Roman times in verse.

I wrote the contents of *Cain*. I was in the cinema today and saw some stupid dramas which had quite a number of touching scenes, and also the arrival of Prinz von Wied in Durazzo. The best of all is the image of corpulent youth (Falcons) where different gymnastic games are shown. Today the "raid" on the high school is on. Kurtagić is leading, followed by Katović (corridor), Debossens (administration), Seferović and Jarakula. They will meet at the same location as the last time. I myself would like to go for the sake of poetry, not for the questions. I cannot go, however, as my parents would notice. They are asleep now. Dad scolded me saying I was rude, although I wasn't.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 29 March 1914 – (17 years and 3 months)

State of mind after the death of a friend

Franjo Braun died today. I feel sorry for him, being young like me, we went together into the elementary school. He had tuberculosis of the throat. I spent with him many beautiful, childhood days. Everything passes, yes, all the days are monotonous and I am taken over by melanchony. Reading itself has become a bore, always the same, and I do not have any motive in my spirit. I only sober up when I am with colleagues. Zelenika tells of his late father, his mother and childhood spent with a brother lieutenant. He is very good-hearted, only it's a pity he's so sanguine.

⁴² *L'art pour l'art* – a French expression denoting opinion according to which art is a purpose unto itself. It is also an esthetic trend based on the thesis that style and works of art have a purpose of their own and do not need explanations or rules. The expression was first used by Theophile Gautier in 1835 to describe art freed from religious and ethical constraints.

Critical review of Ibsen's Gespenster

I read Ibsen's *Gespenster*. It is apparent at once that he is a great writer and idealist, but I don't like naturalism. The work wishes to uncover the evil sides of mankind and to improve them (hereditation), but the reader doesn't enjoy the work and lacks that sublime delight which I seek. People can be made better in other ways (by means of congregation, etc.), whereas for the arts higher motifs should be chosen, which uplift a man, not lead him again into the banal life which surrounds him. A good man, who reads about hereditation, develops pity for ruined people, but as he is not of such kind, it has no artistic impact upon him.

Schoolboy adventures

Tonight was the night of the "raid".⁴³ They were overcome by fear. The beating of Ante's heart – he was standing by the door – could be heard in the administration room. Šandor and Seid were also frightened, because the corridors are acoustic, every sound is like shooting from a rifle. All in all, they said the situation was "terrible". My mark in religion is 3 (good), Debossens saw it.

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 1 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Description of daily events and meetings

On Monday was Braun's funeral. His mother weeped silently, while the father was struggling to keep control of himself. May peace be upon his soul. I am rather nervous, my eyes ache and I cannot work a lot.

I read one chant from *Pan Tadeusz*. It reads like a novel, but is more difficult, like an epos. It is lyric in part. In school Bijelić lectured on Tordine. We are done with natural sciences for this year. Byron influenced the romantics. His demonic, strong and displeasing writing (*Cain*) had influence on Hugo's *Hernani*.⁴⁴

My mother objects when I start reading something. I took five oranges, this is medicine for my weak stomach. I am having a good time with my colleagues, but even the greatest pleasure is tinted with sorrow. Everything is monotonous. I cannot implement what I have read, nor can I go on perfecting my thoughts. I am looking forward to the metropolis where my spiritual horizon will be broadened. From my baker, Miss Franjić I bought several bread rolls. She is beautiful. A slight tint of red on her face. Her brother – redhaired – and some Bosnian woman were inside and wished us good teeth.

Banja Luka, 7 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

After the concert, serenades under the girls' windows

I haven't written for a long time, because in the evening, when is my best time to write, my mother forbids me. On Saturday, 4th April, there was the Stojanović-Weidlich concert. The first is a Viennese composer, and the second a 15-year old schoolboy, virtuoso on the piano. After the party, around 11 p.m. about fifteen of us (mainly graduate pupils) went to the Banja Luka Field and we sang. Bijelić kept the rhythm. When we had had enough, we came back from the monument and sang a serenade to Miss Puškar (in Rudolph's Street). They were looking under the curtain. We sang two more serenades⁴⁵ then we went under Božić's windows. Here Duško (Bijelić) sometimes sings solo songs. When it was finally enough, we left the courtyard, but inside somebody lit a lamp. We stopped, but as everything grew silent, we proceeded to the road; at that moment voices

⁴³ Ivan's colleagues broke into the school during the night to see their marks in the teachers' room.

⁴⁴ *Hernani* - a drama by Victor Hugo

⁴⁵ German: Ständchen

were heard from the house, and we started to sing. This was repeated several times, but we were wrong in our expectations that someone would invite us inside. Then we went straight on and sang to the little Miss Franjić, but no one appeared. We came in front of the *Balkan* and began negotiating with the wife of boss Niko to sing for her. At that very moment, Mutan – this is what Bijelić calls Skok⁴⁶ – appeared and said: "We will come back to this matter" We knew nothing better than to say: "*Bonsoir. Le concert était magnifique.*"⁴⁷

A schoolboy adventure – “raid” on the teachers’ room during the night

Merz describes in detail his first personal “raid” on the high school teachers’ room with his colleagues who persuaded him to go along; they examined the marks in the teachers’ journals, searched for questions without success and he ends with these words:

I lay awake long, what we had done swirled around in my head. I was hot, and only now I became aware that there I was in a kind of fever and tense, although I believed that I was completely free and calm. It was nice and in a boyish manner. I went for the sake of poetry, not for the questions. Yesterday Skok scolded us for behaving like tramps and was furious as we have never seen him before. He screamed at Kurtagić telling him that he was a phrasemonger.

Spiritual state of disorientation

We have no school today and I had my army medical.⁴⁸ They still didn't accept me for good. He said I had weak eyes, that my eye lens is distorted and all the beams do not fall into one point. I should receive my verdict tomorrow (Height: 1 m, 73.5 cm).

My intellectual state is pretty miserable. I am a great sceptic, literature lifts me up, especially in the evening, but when I go out, I ask myself why am I doing it when I cannot find out anything more. Luban holds lectures about *Moderna*⁴⁹ and this interests me; after studying it, heaviness returns.

Today I got the *Gral*⁵⁰ from Milanović and I read *On the Path of the Young Goethe*.⁵¹ It's been a long time since I read something as beautiful as this. It lifted my spirits. I realized Jörgensen feels sometimes just like I do.

(here follows a lengthy quotation of this article which found resonance in Merz's soul)

Banja Luka, Easter Sunday, 12 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Liturgical celebration of Easter

We have thirteen days free. The period of fasting was rather sad. Only the weather hinted that this was the time of passion and death of the great Teacher. Moreover, it was snowing. The procession was not as gay and elevated as it used to be. Some oppressive atmosphere presses down upon the people. Is it due to social or political misery or lack of ideals? Probably the latter. I doubt that it occurred to anyone that this was a representation

⁴⁶ Petar SKOK, teacher of French in the Banja Luka High School. Later university professor and Ivan Merz's mentor for doctoral dissertation

⁴⁷ French: “Good evening. The concert was magnificent.”

⁴⁸ Medical examination before being drafted into the army

⁴⁹ Moderna (modernism) is an art movement which was born in Vienna and lasted between 1890 and 1910. It relates to the development of modernism in the Austrian capital and its impact on philosophy, literature, music, fine arts, design and architecture. The Viennese moderna had its influence in Croatia, too. We had new literary trends born. The causes are a saturation with previous styles in literature (realism and naturalism), and the emergence of new ideological and philosophical movements. The founder of moderna is Henri Bergson who claims that the “unconscious” in man is the cause of everything that happens.

⁵⁰ Gral – German literary Catholic journal

⁵¹ German: Auf den Pfaden des jungen Goethe

of Him - Who⁵² is the purpose and aim of our eternal desires, Who is the Lord of universal eternity and infinity and Who arranges every detail in nature, every blade of grass and every ant.

Today I attended a Great Mass in the bishop's church and the singing was in Glagolitic.⁵³ More beautiful than Latin. If the entire Mass had been celebrated in Glagolitic it would be more elevated and would attract the Croats more, because they could be proud of having their own ancient Church (as the Mass used to be celebrated in earlier times).



Parish church in Banja Luka where Ivan Merz is entered in the Baptismal Registry.

Easter greetings to friends

After lunch, I went with Mänd and Odić to say greetings to Plach. From there we proceed to Kučinić and on the way, we met the little Jović and Kučinić. At Kučinić's place there was a pensioner with a long head, brown moustache and the old Babić, Bogdan's father. He is just like the "illustrissimus Batorić" (Đalski, *Under the Old Roofs*). He charms the whole company, knows of Edison and Tesla, and speaks about his son. He says: "This was in 1895, on 15th of May, it was snowing, and I was going from Prnjavor to Svinjar". The man is good-natured, never uttering an evil word, and he can talk about occupation.

From Kučinić we proceeded to the Jovićs⁵⁴ (on my initiative). In front of the door we met Bürger and took him along. We entered (they didn't even know me) and we went to the guest room which contained a piano, an old German table with a green tablecloth, etc. Anka and Luca (the former 19, the latter 16) led us in, and my heart started beating. We sat, and at once the door opened from the south-west and along the first table with cakes there was Mileva Bašić, also sitting, and the sister of her fiancé, a rather good

⁵² Out of respect for Christ Merz writes on all three places in this sentence Who with capital W.

⁵³ Old Church Slavic

⁵⁴ The Jovićs - a well known and numerous Catholic family from Banja Luka which gave two Jesuits: Matija and Dragan Jović

looking Slovenian. Her hair (chestnut-blonde) was tied like a ball of wool, her face was rosy (towards red), and she had a protruding lower jaw. When she speaks Slovenian, I feel gladness in my heart. Mrs. Božić was telling us about Skok, how she trimmed his beard and how he loves when she fights with him in teasing. In those moments, he grows red from joy. Anka played, we hummed, and then Mrs. Božić and the Slovenian sang. We were standing mute. We asked Bürger and he recited a Slovenian poem *To the Homeland*. With special feeling, he pronounced the words "Love, my mother". Upon that, Kurtagić recited the *Curse of Delal Paša* written by some Muslim. Delal Paša slayed the proud knights, and the mother of one of the slain ones cursed Travnik and the curse came true. The atmosphere in the dark room was particularly nice. It's been a long time since I have been so happy.

Serious preparations for the graduation exam

I am not reading a thing. I would like to read the French writers, but I don't have the translations. I started reading Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and as I cannot understand all the allegories (*Dodiekönig*) I was searching for his biography which might contain a commentary. But who will find that in Banja Luka. So, I stopped at the 3rd Act. I came to the conclusion that it would suit my ideals to graduate with the mark "excellent". It would serve me in enrolment at the University. I must make 4 drawings, two orthogonal and two in perspective. I plan to do this during the Easter break, and this will be my math practice for graduation. As for the history from the 12th until 19th century, I simply don't know it. I will also do this over the Easter break. This year I will read one French book. As for German and Croatian books, I won't even glance at them. I must repeat analytics and geography. I know the physics from the last year. As to this year's acoustics, I am far from perfect.

Banja Luka, 13 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Drawings for the school

I did a drawing in perspective. I am still left to do the shadow. It isn't a very precise work. Tomorrow I will do the following: a ball lies in a pentagonal dodecahedron. One needs to find the shadows (orthogonal projection). I bought a white sheet from Petrović (size 102 x 72 cm). I couldn't split it up into four parts each measuring 32 x 46 cm. Petrović showed me the solution. Uncle Heinrich will go to Rome. I would gladly go with him.

Banja Luka, 15 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Critically towards spiritualism

Today I was drawing for five hours and finally made my drawing. I hope to make another one tomorrow. Plach was present at a spiritualist seance. The spirit rightly guessed (shaking the table) all the past events, and as for the future he said that four of us would fail at the graduation exam – 2 Catholics, 1 Orthodox and 1 Muslim. This is impossible. The solution came in Seido's dream. He had a vision that the guard Hadija caught Kurtagić, Zelenika, him and me during our night "raid" and took us to the black house. It stands to reason, therefore, that the graduation exam is very strict and that four of us must fail.

In Travnik a flag is being consecrated and several of the boys, members of the Croatian Catholic organization are going there. Maybe Plach. I have a great desire to go

there to visit her grave⁵⁵. I never forget her, not a day passes without thought of her and prayer to God for her eternal soul. If spiritualism were for real, I would go speak to her.

Banja Luka, 17 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Reflections on life, work, faith, happiness, evil and eternity

Today I almost finished the fourth drawing. Tomorrow I will finish and color the three of them. With this I am done with descriptive math for good. I feel sorry for her. Maybe one day I will do the drawings for my son. Otherwise, I did nothing else.

When a man works like this, like a machine, without thinking of anything, he doesn't know why he lives. When a man is alive, he must think of eternal things and find happiness in these reflections. But, is one entitled to happiness here? Isn't this world the world of work and toil and depending on how one performs in this world, he gets an award in the other world which is eternal. This life is only a preparation. Poets and philosophers say that a man can find happiness in work and that by mechanical work people will be improved. This is true, but with this work mankind is so preoccupied that it doesn't think of evil and is incapable of committing an evil act. Whereas, for intellectual workers where evil waits and sneaks upon the man from all sides and where one is forced to think, it is harder. Therefore, they do not resist evil in the same manner as workers do (not lazybones) and they become immoral (present-day "ingelligentsia"). An intellectual worker shouldn't, as is the case today, work only for the sake of salary, but rather spiritually in the interest of higher causes and must create for himself a deep philosophical foundation to remain virtuous. This is very difficult and therefore, to prevent the penetration of evil, mechanical work would be better; but "Eternity" gave human nature and also directly through Its Son the primitive faith which is the deepest philosophical foundation. An intellectual worker, if he wants to be virtuous and to pursue his matters with interest, must believe. Faith is more necessary for an intellectual than for the worker. For the worker, under current state regulations, faith is not so necessary (in the practical sense, not metaphysical, because it is indispensable for all), because he must work to earn his daily bread. To a wealthier worker, it is necessary because it protects him from the misuse of his capital and from laziness. For an intellectual, faith is not only "practical", but a source of eternal ideas – art, etc.

Banja Luka, 18 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

*About high school graduation, his ideals, the "dearest nation",
Tannhäuser and the first love*

I completed all the drawings and with this I am done with descriptive math. Tomorrow I plan to study geography. All because of the stupid graduation. One loses time on things which will be forgotten anyhow. How much more I would enjoy reading poetry. When I read a literary magazine, my heart aches seeing how many beautiful and elevated things exist in this world, and I have no time to devote myself to that. When I will be in the Academy, I will edit Croatian papers and follow the affairs of my dearest nation.

Today I saw *Tannhäuser* in the cinema. It was wonderful. Painting motifs are excellent. Dance in the Venus Mountain, bathing, dance down the hill, old German attire. I already spoke about ideas; I will only mention music which illustrates how Venus makes suggestions to Tannhäuser and entices him to come to her.

Tomorrow is Orthodox Easter. I can never forget her. Schiller's verse comes to my mind: "Oh, if it only remained eternally green, the beautiful time of first love."⁵⁶

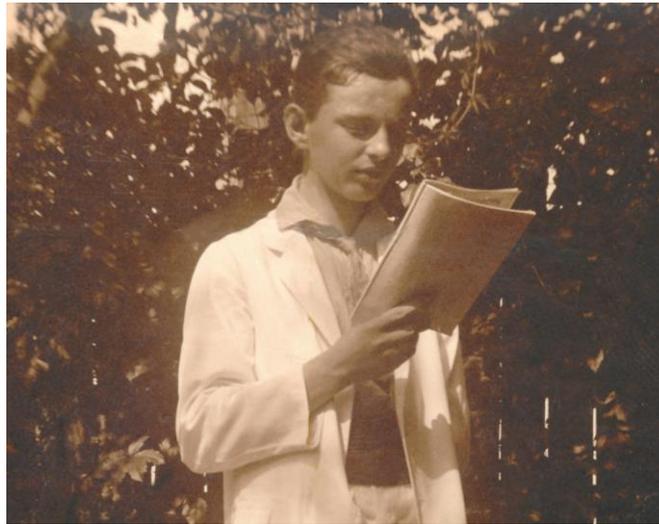
⁵⁵ Greta was buried in the Travnik cemetery

⁵⁶ German: O, dass sie ewig bleibe, die schöne Zeit der ersten Liebe.

Banja Luka, 23 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Adventures, graduation, desire for philosophy

Yesterday the school started. It's as if we didn't have a break at all. On the 16th of April, Seid, Kurtagić and others went into the school, if I'm not mistaken. I lent them the key of the teachers' desk. Seido's shoe fell into turpentine, but they didn't find a thing. (Outside the maids expect... Animals!) I didn't read anything, but I learned geography pretty well. Optics and painting with colors (with 3 colors) interests me a lot. Yesterday I was looking at Saturn and its ring. I cannot philosophize as much as I would like, because mother is forcing me into bed.



Already as a high school student Ivan Merz was interested in literature and read a lot.

Banja Luka, 26 April 1914 – (17 years and 4 months)

Written graduation exam and a review of Peer Gynt

I am sentimentally contented today. A decree came from the Government yesterday that the written graduation exam is on 15th June, and the oral one on 10th July. Two of us are taking the examination in the morning, and two in the afternoon. My turn is on the 3rd day (12th July) in the morning, with Mujagić. I am glad to take the examination with him because he is a good man. I have sufficient time to prepare myself; in the course of preparations I read Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. I fully understood the first three acts, but by the end there were many things I couldn't comprehend. The guiding thought of this drama is the following: what is the effect of excessive phantasy (as a matter of fact, hereditary illness) on man's doings, if it cannot be channeled into poetic work. This can be followed transparently in the first three acts. The thoughts of the fourth and fifth act can be understood, but the details are incomprehensible (Knopfgiesser, etc.). I will write about this in my other notebook.



The building of the former Banja Luka railway station in the center of the town where the Merz family lived (first floor, left). This is where Ivan started writing his Diary. Today the building houses an art gallery.

Christ's love in the Eucharist

I am reading *Gral* and I am uplifted. The more I get to know Catholicism, the more I see how inexhaustible it is. I already yearn to receive His Body: the Purpose and ultimate reason of humanity. How great is His Love, when He, the Immeasurable, who is beyond comprehension; He who directs the entire universe and every blade of grass and who knows and looks upon the quarreling of the miserable human race, gives us, small and worthless as we are, Himself to eat. "There are but few who know the secret of love, the unquenchability and eternal thirst. The God-given meaning of the Last Supper is a riddle for earthly senses" (Novalis). Mom is compelling me to retire.

Banja Luka, 1 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

He finds accord in Turgenev's thoughts about the transience of life

"How empty and withered and useless is every thing that passed! How few traces it leaves behind itself! How senselessly and stupidly all these hours passed upon hours flew away. However, one wants to live, respecting life, believing in oneself, in the future... O, what riches one expects of the future. But how does one imagine that the next, the coming days will not be just like the one that just passed? Yes, one doesn't consider it at all. One doesn't like to think at all – and good for that. 'Yes, tomorrow, tomorrow' – one consoles oneself, - until this 'tomorrow' topples him down into the grave. And suddenly, in the grave, like it or not, you stop to think."

This is a fragment from Turgenev's poetic diary *Poem in Prose*. Such feelings were engulfing me until yesterday, but now there is a more pressing issue – Yugoslavia.⁵⁷

Banja Luka, Sunday, 3 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Review of Turgenev's and Balsac's works

I am writing in bed; mom and dad think that I am asleep. It's a pity I have to write secretly, but otherwise every day would just pass in vain. These are interesting times. I read only a little because I cannot get hold of a good book. I read Turgenev's *Poems in*

⁵⁷ Some high school pupils in Banja Luka, especially those of Serbian nationality, met secretly and discussed destroying the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and establishing a new state of Yugoslavia. Merz knew of these meetings, and it seems from this fragment that the idea began to appeal to him. However, he is about to change his opinion soon.

Prose. This is elevated poetry, Beethoven's music. He is a great and pleasant writer. I would be happy to have a picture of him.

I am practicing French. I am translating Balsac's *Eugenie Grandet* into Croatian, and then backwards into French. In such a way, I practice my style and learn the words. I always keep *Faust* in my pocket and learn the best passages by heart. The work is divine. For every occasion, for every disposition of the soul, there is an appropriate passage. Smoothness, strength, gentleness of the verses give this work a special charm.

Description of a repeated schoolboy adventure

On 30th April, if I am not mistaken, some colleagues went on a "raid" at the school (Ante, Šandor, Brico, Galicijan, König, Kulenović, etc.). Kulenović seems to have been badly frightened. He was on guard duty downstairs on the corridor, and he walked around, smoked and drank water. He spilled tobacco, but Debossens noticed it and cleaned it up. Kulenović must have been frightened, because he took his shoes and opened a window opposite the chemistry cabinet and jumped out so that the roosters crowed. When they left the teachers' room and were looking after Kulenović on the corridor, and noticed the open windows, they got scared. They thought they were noticed by the guard attending the sewage facility nearby when they had entered, that he summoned a watchman who, they thought, must have called Kulenović. They came out and met Kulen, who said that as they were in the teachers' room for more than an hour he thought they had gone. This is incredible, because all of their shoes were lined up together, and he must have picked his own among all the others. Therefore, cowardice.

Social and political situation before the breakout of World War I

In the afternoon on that day, at 6 p.m. in the Serbian Falcon⁵⁸ a meeting was on about the harmony of Serbs and Croats. The hall was full. Kurtagić opened the session, speaking about the Counts Zrinski and Frankopan. I am sleepy. I will continue some other time. Yesterday I attended a schoolboy party and sang a serenade, while today I amused myself with Miss Franz. Self-analysis follows tomorrow.

Banja Luka, 4 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Resistance to Germanization and desire for the unification of the South Slavs

In line with his habit, Kurtagić was talking in clichés, speaking about the miserable Austrian politics and their behavior toward the hero of Siget. Then he spoke about the Zrinski and Frankopan conspiracy; he made all the right points, but he spoke with an empty heart, so it couldn't make an impact. After him Bürger stood up. He spoke right from the heart, with enthusiasm: "The Black God triumphed over Svantovid⁵⁹. Where are those 100.000 km which were inhabited by Slavs, where is the Rügen Island, the temple of Svantovid? All of it is German now. We ought to remember the Rügen Island. We must get together and establish a Yugoslav state. Let the Serb be a Croat, and the Croat a Serb, etc..." The entire speech was beautiful and full of persuasion. But not everything was correct. Did the Germans at that time, in the 11th, 12th, 13th century willingly Germanize

⁵⁸ The Falcon (SOKOL) was an organization dedicated to physical training and culture which attracted both the young and the adult in Slavic countries. It was founded in Bohemia by Miroslav Tyrš in 1862. It was based on liberal world views. In Croatia it was established in 1874. In order to protect the Catholic youth from negative influences of the Falcon's liberalism, a parallel organization was later established, called Eagle which was based on Catholic principles and world view. The Eagle movement first appeared in Bohemia by the end of the 19th century, followed by Slovenia and in Croatia it appeared in 1919. Both the Croatian Falcon and the Croatian Eagle were abolished in 1929 after the Dictatorship of the 6th January and in their place the Falcon organization of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was set up.

⁵⁹ A deity from the Old Slavic mythology

the Slavic tribes, at a time when there was no national consciousness, but only a religious feeling?! The Templars who did the christening at the same time unwillingly Germanized these tribes.



Building of the Banja Luka High School which Ivan Merz attended.

Doubts in the project of a Yugoslav state

It is a big question whether a Yugoslav state is good for mankind, and especially for the Croats. One cannot blame those who are for it, neither the ones who are against; both strive towards their conviction – the truth. It is hard to say which is right. Observing history, every nation speaking the same language has united in order not to lose balance. This is a historical imperative. As every nation in history up till now after its unification had expansive purposes, the peoples who were not united had to unite in order not to be subjugated. This is what happened with Germany and Italy. As the Croats are really badly off, they must unite, hounded by the bad spirit ruling Europe, in order not to lose the predominance over other peoples, otherwise they are lost. (Every state – not the people – has expansive goals). But unification is bad for culture, because neither the Croats nor the Serbs have a sufficiently rich culture to be able to cross-fertilize each other, but these cultures are reflections of foreign cultures in miniature without a national color. Before unification it is necessary for the Croats to raise their culture, which means building schools; in order to do that, they must attain financial independence. Therefore, “with all available means” fight for this: the nurturing of religious organizations, strengthening of the morale among the people.

I read Ljuba’s *New life* which was given to me (Plach!). It is not the most interesting among the reading stuff, but emanates goodness. He traces the path for an epic writer, a comedian, a playwright, etc. in order to create Croatian national art. We should reflect. I did French. Today I didn’t play the piano.

Impressions from a high school graduation party

The pupils’ concert (2nd May) turned out nicely. We gathered 750 crowns. I danced with Miss Puškar and Miss Smiljanić, etc. We’d serenade Franjić’s daughter, as well as the Božićs, the Pukars, the Smiljanićs and Franz’s daughter. With the latter and Miss Kratenina we strolled yesterday and today. On Sunday I was not in church, because of the concert. I was up until 4 a.m. because we ended up singing a serenade in Miss Franjić’s bakery which sold bread rolls. (Ante, Šandor, König, Čengiće and me. We met Stiks and woke up Odić.) Next time I will go to church come what may.

Banja Luka, 10 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Review of Plato's Phaidon

I read in bed Plato's *Phaidon* and I find it very interesting. His conclusion is that life begins after death.

Banja Luka, 11 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Mood among the people before Ferdinand's assassination, hostile reception of general Potiorek

Today Potiorek⁶⁰ came by car. All the officials were there to greet him, and all the schools except our Technical high school. There was a rumor that the pupils will smear the black-and-red and Hungarian flag. In order to prevent that, the Director had them taken down and warned some pupils. When Potiorek arrived, deputy commander Milić gave a dry speech. Only a few persons shouted "Hail". In the evening the Muslims prepared a torchlight parade. There were many, and Kadi gave a speech full of sincerity; that the Muslims can be brought on the right path, without losing their national identity, being always in favour of the Dynasty and otherwise equal in politics with all the other nations. Kadi ended his speech and shouted: "Hail". All the Muslims followed his lead: "Hail". Silence. At once, a voice was heard: "Down with him, he was a butcher." Everybody stiffened. Terribly embarrassing. At that moment, some from the mass broke out with a song (under the leadership of Gutić, Kurtagić, etc.) *Hail the Slavs*... like some terrible irony for everyone. Everybody listened, and as I stood apart from these parties I realized that all of them are mainly wrong, and only a little bit right. I condemn the negative work because it originates from liberal paid fanatics. They don't know what Love and Truth is, because otherwise they would praise Jesus and be good. "*Gloria Tibi*".

Banja Luka, 13 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

A comment on Prudhomme's poems with an emphasis on ideals

Potiorek attended our French lesson. Skok picked me. I was translating Gautier's *Le pot de fleur*. I did it wonderfully. This poem is similar to Prudhomme's *La vase brisé*. The poet noticed a girl and didn't know he loved her. Later on, love became so strong that he could only tear it out from his heart by bleeding to death. He compared this with a boy who found a seed and put it in a pot. After some time, a small bush appeared whose roots penetrated the porcelain and if he would have tried to pull the roots from the porcelain, his hand would bleed out. Prudhomme's poem *L'ideal* is an especially beautiful symbolic religious poem. The poet compares the ideals of mankind with a star which the people haven't seen yet, but he says: "You, the last people, give greetings to the star when it appears". He wants to say that nowadays viciousness rules, which sees no ideals in front of itself. Only a few people have a presentiment of these ideals, but the time will come when everybody will live as a single herd with one Shepherd and the ideals will shine forth.

⁶⁰ Oskar POTIOREK (1853–1933) was an Austro-Hungarian general and military governor in charge of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By the end of 1913, Potiorek invited the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand to visit Sarajevo. Potiorek was in the car at the moment of Archduke's assassination. The assassin Gavrilo Princip intended to kill Potiorek with the second bullet, but he missed and killed the Crown Prince's wife. After the assassination Potiorek was one of the most vocal proponents of the war with Serbia. During World War I, he commanded the Balkan Army and 6th Army on the Balkan battlefield.

Every day I go to the little Miss Franjić. *Peut être c'est une "graine". Je ne le sais maintenant.*⁶¹ She keeps her head leaned against her arm and reads. I ask her what she is reading (Ante and Debossens were with her), and she says *Tena*. I understood chrysanthemum and told her it would be better to smell them.

Banja Luka, 14 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

School, friends, girl

We were writing a school paper in Croatian. A verse by Burus. Together with Ljuba, we wonderfully analyzed Werther. I wrote about Aristophanus. Plach dreamt that I had died as a boy. Mira Kellerova came. True, she must have been beautiful as a girl. She still is.

Banja Luka, 15 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Events of long ago, remembering Greta, the problem of conscience, the first mention of a Croatian Catholic Movement

Today I read *Eugenie Grandet* and learned the topic on electricity. I played piano. I like it a lot. Too bad that I am clumsy. Wroblevski went away. I feel sorry for him seeing him kiss his children. The little Miss Franjić is reading Chrysanthemum by Lotti. She is so cute, and I...? God, is it a sin? What is Greta feeling... She is my idol. Kratena discussed his movements with Ante. True, the boys from the Croatian Catholic organization⁶² did a lot for the people. They have many organizations all over. Ante is too much of an idealist.

Banja Luka, 17 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Condition of the eyes, visiting church as a therapy against skepticism, daily happenings

Today I visited a physician. My medical documentation came back from the Corps Command because he didn't write the degree of astigmatism. Dr. Pausal looked at me and I could read all but the smallest letters. Actually, I knew them by heart because I had seen the table up close, and this helped me to read better (FZBDE, OELZTG).

I sometimes have terrible thoughts in my head. Therefore, I went to the church service to find solace.⁶³ Only *Memento mori*⁶⁴ that the priest recited destroyed my skepticism and despair.

I read *Eugenie Grandet* and learned a lot of words. I played *Cavaleria* and *Barcarola*. They are especially soft pieces. Yesterday they were in school and Plach saw the marks. I have 3 (good) in chemistry and religion. He never asked me chemistry, but this is because I laugh during the lessons. I do it because he doesn't explain anything, but translates from a German book and dictates word for word.

I always go to the little Miss Franjić for chocolate, and when I step inside, she asks me: "Milka?"

⁶¹ French: "Maybe this is the seed (of love). At the moment, I don't know"

⁶² This organization, part of the large *Croatian Catholic Movement* was established by bishop Antun Mahnić on Krk in 1903.

⁶³ Edify myself, find solace, encouragement

⁶⁴ Latin: *Memento mori* - Remember that you will die.

Banja Luka, 21 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

Discussions about faith and world view

On Monday, 18 May we argued in school on grounds of religion. Kurtagić attacked religion in a shallow manner and insulted Luban. I got very excited.

On the same day, I left for Zagreb because of my eyes. Along the way, I had an argument with some Lutheran. He said: “God is also Satan, because he created sin. He is not almighty, because evil predominates in the world.” Therefore, he doesn’t believe in God, but in good and evil powers which are fighting each other. The evil one is prevailing. This is what the Protestants’ liberalism leads you to. To the denial of the human Ideal. Besides, the image of a good and evil power is illogical. He doesn’t believe in free will. So, the two have an argument. The evil power speaks from him, and, for the sake of argument, let’s assume also from me. And his arguments prevail. It means the evil power has outwitted itself. Thinking I am not receptive to arguments, he left. A young Orthodox priest wondered about him. In Sisak I met Kratena. I went to the 3rd class wagon. Here I met some Bosnian peasants who know neither letters nor crafts and still they travelled to Zagreb.



Ivan’s teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković in his younger days.

Description of his stay in Zagreb and various meetings there

As no one met me upon my arrival (Kranjc), I went to sleep at Kratena’s place. It would be better to say I stayed awake all night because in the house opposite there was singing and shouting toasts the whole night. When Kratena came, he was for the first time in *Domagoj*⁶⁵, then he went under the window and shouted “lady colleague”. She, a member of the Croatian Catholic organization came outside, and they talked about some official matters. Another member lives with Kratena, a nice future lawyer in the fourth year of his studies (Perkovec?). The next morning I was in the military hospital and had my eyes checked. Astigmatism of 6/8 (almost normal) was established. I bought a copy of *Vihor*, a nationalist paper, and *Le disciple* of Bourget (Nelson). I visited the Kranjc family. They didn’t expect me, and Šandor came home late. In the evening, I was with them in the theatre and saw Schnitzler’s *Flirtation*. I was sitting in the second row. The theatre is the same as described in *Nobleman’s Nest*⁶⁶ and I felt like Nezhdanov in the *New Generation*. He also came into the front row in an unusual manner. As he was unfashionably dressed, and he was hurrying toward the ticket office, a gentleman pushed him slightly. He, to show off, bought a ticket in the front row and looked upon that gentleman. In the theatre, he was sitting next to Sipyagin. A lady was sitting in front of me; as I later surmised, she

⁶⁵ Domagoj – a Catholic organization for the youth, part of the *Croatian Catholic Movement*

⁶⁶ Turgenev’s story from *A Hunter’s Sketches*

had a girl-like face, blond hair, blue eyes, reddish elongated cheeks, a German type. Mildness and goodness emanated from her looks and movements.

Description and critique of Schnitzler's Flirtation

Schnitzler's *Flirtation* is technically successful, but otherwise absurd and shallow, what seems to be a general feature, I think, of modern drama. A pupil fell in love with a demonic lady. (...) Idea: a real, faithful love is found in simple girls, not in demonic ones. (...) The work has no depth, because it seems that the author is on the side of flirtation. This is against a deep moral. (...) The work is of passing value.

(Here follows a short overview and critique of the contents of the drama)

Return from Zagreb to Banja Luka and daily events

That night I saw Skerles going from the theatre and stepping into a car. When I heard his name, I thought of a gun. Today I heard that the next evening after the *Théâtre parée* – Tosca – as he was leaving the theatre with Archduke Salvatore, a pupil wanted to shoot at them. Having slept at Kranjc's place, I took the train at half past two, arriving at 9 in the morning, and at 10 I went to school. I slept in the afternoon. I played Bach and Beethoven from the *Sang und Klang* (*Spring, Bagatelles*). I read 8 history questions. I read *Eugenie Grandet* and I learned the words. I went for my Milka chocolate (Franjić). Tomorrow we go (the pupils) to Kostajnica.

Banja Luka, 29 May 1914 – (17 years and 5 months)

School trip to Kostajnica

On Saturday 23rd May we made a trip with Leinert. At noon, we sat in the carriage, 4th class wagon, where there was enough space. Already near the Emperor's Street (Kaiserstrasse) some girls waved at us, and we sent them kisses from the train. It was amusing, we played and climbed upon each other. In Ivanjska we saw Anka Jovićeva. We had a good time all the way. In Prijedor and Novi we went out and bought oranges, cakes, etc. In Dobrljin we bought the tickets and switched (coffee!) to the 3rd class wagon. We arrived in Kostajnica and went with our backpacks into town. Hrvatska Kostajnica is a dirty town, although it has asphalt. Some old women sat by their doors and observed us critically. A real *Saumur – Ville de Province*. We passed through the main road, and took another one back, parallel to the first one. This road has parks. Here is our church, not of some beauty. Pretty maids sat in the parks, looking... and realized the nature of the game. We came back wishing to see the pretty girls. On the way, we shouted names of girls in Kostajnica which Plach collected while he was here. We came to the Una Bridge. Here it is truly beautiful. On the left side by the bridge we saw a tasty house in Secessionist style, and on the other side, on the other bank, the ruins of the Zrinski castle. A true contrast. We stood on the bridge and watched the Una River flow. It flows and flows. It is a proud witness of the Zrinski castle, looking at its ruins, and now also looking upon the modern building which will "soon" follow the destiny of the former. On the bridge, some Jew, a former waiter, gave us a moral lesson in the German language.



Hrvatska Kostajnica – picture from 1910

We passed the bridge to examine the old ruins. The view was beautiful. On one side one could see the Una River and the whole of Hrvatska Kostajnica, and on the other side, where once the cannon was placed, a view opened on the Bosnian hills. A courageous town. How many attacks did it have to endure from the Turkish side. We went a bit further and immediately we felt a Bosnian atmosphere. The Gypsies sang and played, while Muslims sat in front of the coffee shops, drinking coffee. Some Muslim, a teacher, greeted us and asked the Mayor to provide us with a place to sleep. We left all our things in that house. To everybody's pleasure, the most beautiful girls were standing by the window and below the window on the bench. We went and sat in a coffee shop. The teacher treated us all with coffee. The girls were strolling beside us, and we were giving them regards from Banja Luka. I was shouting the family name Ostrašnjak which I had found out from Plach. And really, among these young ladies there was this Ostrašnjak. We went with the teacher into Hrvatska Kostajnica and he told us what a friend of his, a Turkish officer, told him about the taking of Drinopolje. The facts are as follows: the Bulgarians captured it courageously, not the Serbs, as they are claiming now. Several of us talked to three young ladies and parted with them forever. We returned into Bosanska Kostajnica and wrote the postcards – I wrote to Miss Franjić and signed "Milka", and to my parents. While we were walking, the others occupied – God only would know how – all the Kostajnica beauties and had a good time with them. We came closer and made some order. We distributed all of them so that everyone, as if by law, had one girl, which means Kurtagić and myself had two each – Julka Rabađija and another whose name I cannot remember. In such a manner, we walked the streets some more. Alongside König was Julka's sister, a big girl, but beautiful and refined. In such an arrangement, we walked and had fun. In casual conversation, I found out that this is the one whose photo Kratena showed me in the wagon; we and the three girls went into a dark alley. They sat on a bench, we brought another one and sat across. Now the singing started. The older Rabađija sang with a beautiful soprano. She sang with a high pitch some melodies of well known songs that became corrupted in Bosnia. We sang *Dido* and other songs. Bijelić also sang solo. The beauty of this evening will remain long in memory. Some young ladies went home on the order of their mothers, and we escorted the Rabađija girls. The younger of the two loves a certain Karger, the son of a hotel keeper in Kladanj, and she asked Kurtagić to write to Kladanj and inquire about him. He promised, and I sealed the promise. She is so kind. We parted forever.

I wonder how the hours of happiness pass so quickly. They pass quickly and therefore are not deep. What is deep in them, this is eternal. The memory of beauty is eternal.

To sleep was a nightmare. One couldn't even turn around, this is how densely packed we were. We made chaos. I slept for half an hour, the rest I was awake. Around 4 a.m. we were on the move – we washed our face on the road and said goodbye to the beautiful Kostajnica. In front of the railway station we took coffee, and a mad dog on a chain tried to scare us. We fed him with bread rolls. We took the train to Dobrljin, passing over the Una River and then through Croatian villages which are so characteristic.

Visit to the Zrinj fortress

The path towards Zrinj was difficult, but beautiful. We ascended by the road and looked at cultivated fields and meadows. The sun was burning. We asked the peasants to tell us when will we come to Zrinj. They always said half an hour more, though we had walked for two hours already. Finally, we came to Zrinj. It is a beautiful village. One could see the church from afar, and it was a pleasure for me to see it. *Chiesa nostra!*⁶⁷ Having eaten oranges and lemons, Plach and I went to the priest to lead us. He had to celebrate Mass, so he couldn't. Some of us took milk in a peasant house, then we wrote the postcards. The notary took us to Zrinj, the fortress after which the Croatian family Šubić got its name Zrinjski – a name now so famous and honorable. By roundabout ways we came to the ruins where the heroes lived and defended Europe from Turkish attacks with their mighty hand. All you can see is in ruins. Inside is an orchard. You can see the buried hole which led into an underground tunnel. We went to the northern side of the citadel and looked down. Terrible. This is the strongest part of the fortress, and therefore, here was the apartment of the family. Then we climbed on the tower which looks toward the south-east. They had small windows on all sides, and the view stretches on with no end. Immediately below the fortress we could see the roofs of houses on one street, and a little further down is the church. In the distance, we could see the mountains, around which there is a road twisting. The walls of the tower are thick. Once upon a time the Austrian military kept guard here waiting for the Turkish attack, but as it never came, out of despair they burnt the place, so it had to be renovated. After that it was burnt again two or three times, and then, following the catastrophe of the Wiener Neustadt it was deserted. Now these ruins are only the living history, a memory of former glory and power. Everything passes. Only the great unknown always is. One should strive towards it.



Ruins of the old town of Zrinj – the tower

⁶⁷ Italian: our church. With these two words, inserted into a description of a trip, Merz wanted to express his feelings and love of the Church as an institution and spiritual centre which enriches our inner life.

Passing through Novi

We ate well and around 11 a.m. we set out towards Novi. The way was good. Though there was still some climbing to endure, it was not as bad as before. We passed through many villages, and the peasants were friendly, clean. Although it was a Sunday, we didn't see anybody drunk. We saw drunkards only before Novi and Dvor. We were tired by then. We stopped everywhere. We lay in the shade of a nearby small forest and ate sugar. We arrived in Novi around 4 p.m. It is nicely situated. The Una River is beautiful with its banks and houses reflected in its waters. We returned home at 9 p.m.

Return to everyday school life, about Greta in dreams

The next day Ljuba gave a lecture on the history of the novel; he made it all really good. I took notes. Yesterday I dreamt about Greta and spoke with her in a dream. I felt such heaviness in the morning. I was sad the whole day. I read *Eugenie Grandet* in Serbian, then in French only 110 pages. There are many unknown words. I read almost the entire Civic science book. In *Luč Magazine* a rather nice article about Beuronese art (*l'art pour Dieu*).⁶⁸

Banja Luka, 3 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Preparations for the high school graduation exam

Yesterday we prepared the drawings (freehand) for graduation. It was the last day of drawing and descriptive maths. Leinert told Mujagić that he would give no more examples. In all probability, he will give those which he already gave us. Kurtagić asked Pavičić in private if he will ask everyone what each of us had learnt, and he told him: "Graduation is a formality, to say good bye to us, and tell your colleagues that they already know their questions." (With this he said that they will ask each of us what we know). When I heard this, I realized graduation is a children's game. Maraković told me to learn the realistic novel because of Elkehard. To Debossens he said Werther, etc.

I did nothing yesterday, because I felt weak. Today I am reading *Eugenie Grandet* in original.

Banja Luka, 4 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Work in school before the graduation exam

In the French class, we spoke about H. Taine and his view that a state is nothing else but police power. In Croatian, we completed the writers Lazarević, Ljubiša, Veselinović and Matavulj. In the afternoon, I played tennis until 6.30. I worked on a descriptive example (icosahedron) and translated *Eugenie Grandet*.

Banja Luka, Friday, 5 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

School, reading, tennis, playing music

In religion class Pajić read from a book about the inquisition. It seems to justify it in part, e.g. the expulsion of Arabs from Spain. Fanaticism. I played tennis for two hours. I did my descriptive example (pentadodecahedron) and read *Eugenie Grandet*. I read Maraković's wonderful review of Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali in *Hrvatska prosvjeta*. I will surely study him more. There are no more night "raids" on the school, as the questions were distributed already. The last time they went was on Saturday. They were looking for copies, but didn't find a trace. At 4.30 p.m. I was supposed to have a piano

⁶⁸ Beuronese art – a school of art which was especially cultivated in the German Benedictine monastery Beuron, according to which art was a means in the service of creating sacred content and glorifying God.

lesson, but as I had played tennis, and didn't have a watch, I forgot, so I came home after 5. This must not happen again, to miss a duty for the sake of pleasure. With this act, I created an upsetting situation for her, and I am sorry.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 7 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Preparations for the graduation exam, literary works, amusement, dream about Travnik

Yesterday he asked me physics (optics: the formula for the calculation of the distance of an image from an object $1/a + 1/b = 1/f$) and I did well. Leinert spoke about the history of mathematics and said that we ought to know this at the graduation exam. A part of Fant's equation and spheric trigonometry, too. This frightened us a bit, but nevertheless, after that we were jumping and had fun. Vujičić indirectly called us swines for playing during his class.

Yesterday I read *Eugenie Grandet*. In the evening, I went to the fair. In the evening, Ante went with me to see Miss Franjić, we had fun with her and Miss Vlašić. This morning I got up at 11, after a good night's sleep. For this reason, I didn't go to church, but it is a lame excuse.

The Göschen books arrived (Volkskunde, Geschichte der Mathematik, Pädagogik, Differentials, Integral, Luftschiffe, Metereologie, Vetterkunde, Aufsatzentwürfe, Englische Literaturgeschichte, Ibsen & Bjornson, Shakespeare Astronomie, Natur & Geisteswelt and Miniatur Biblitek). They are appropriate for the graduation exam. Today I put into order the translation of Novalis's Anthems and I myself wrote a poem in the manner of R. Tagore; I believe I will send it to Luč Magazine. I went to the fair and used all the tickets which the owner of the carrousel gave to dad. I rode with Miss Ballianova, Miss Puškar, Miss Szalay, etc. I saw an optical illusion – a head without a body. I cannot explain it. In the morning, I thought of Greta because I dreamt about Travnik.

Banja Luka, 11 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Daily events, girl, reading, Communion

These days the fair was on and I was there every day until today with the little Miss Franjić. She has a great education of the heart. I promised her books. I read a review about Shakespeare. For the graduation exam, I only did geography, and that was the day before yesterday. Today I received Holy Communion. I sent to Pajić the translation of Novalis to send it to Luč.

Banja Luka, 12 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Farewells and the end of the high school, transience

Today was one day before the last at school. Skok parted with us in an especially touching manner. Firstly, he struck the desk with the book, for the first time since we know him, and then he asked each one of us what our plans were. He gave us a piece of advice: to work honestly and never seek award. "I hoped that I would cry, but I believed that I would endure".⁶⁹ And so, the time passes. Everything that was dear to me comes to an end.

⁶⁹ French: J'esprais pleurer mais je croyais souffrir

Banja Luka, 13 June 1914, 2 a.m. – (17 years and 6 months)

A regretful contradiction with the ideals

God, what I just saw. Nastiness and beastliness. Poor Croats: you are yourself to blame. Colleagues whom I had respected went to snatch the maids and provoke and bring shame upon the others. Some others went into the public house! Poor Croats! Always ready to speak about ideals, and you wallow in the mire.

Banja Luka, 16 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

A walk and amusement with colleagues

On Saturday, 13th June all of us except Kučinić went to Machnig where a Serbian teacher wonderfully played the accordion. His darling drowned in the river, because her parents wanted to give her to somebody else. He imbues all his melodies with this pain. After that we went to Vlahović; some had already parted. Here we sat at a long table in a small room. At the other table, there were some married men, supposedly Croats, and they did all kinds of things with the maid – a fat bastard with gleaming eyes. Zelenika himself teased Plach and me because of her. God, how mean is a person who cannot respect another's principles (even in joking). The only good thing was singing. We left this place after Zelenika pushed this maid on Plach. As we were going back, I thought we would sing the serenades⁷⁰, but they didn't want to. They love to drink and do other things, but what is beautiful – no. When the Catholics are by themselves, all of us have said that everything goes nicely. Otherwise – with exceptions – it turns nasty. The next day I didn't go to church. I had planned my time badly and I couldn't get up. It will be better the next time. I didn't sleep well this night, I was thinking about the written graduation exam. I woke up at 5 in the morning. I took a walk in the shiny morning and I remembered the trip (the early getting up).

Written graduation exam

We went to school corporatively. We were curious to see how they had placed us in the room. I got a place at the back. Across from me to the right – Kurtagić. Therefore, they placed us according to our abilities. The Director came in with a sealed envelope, and after him Ljuba, a bit pale. He opened it and read to us:

Youth is hope – old age is memory.

The value of navigation for our Monarchy.

Nobody had expected this. At the first moment, I picked the first topic. Nine of us did the same. I wrote it as I had written an ordinary school paper. I mentioned the phases of a man's youth, the youth of a nation and humanity and the phases of old age and how the past gives vitality to old age. (The past gives a nation the strength for further development, etc.) I was done in three hours, and it took me two more to make a clean copy. There were six pages in all. The others wrote more or less about the same length. Luban was the inspector. A man of gold!

Banja Luka, 17 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Relaxing with colleagues after the written exam

After him there were Pavičić, Leinert, Skok and Harazin. Skok and Pavičić are too formal. They make a note of everyone who goes to the toilet. But luckily there was no need for swindling. When I was finished, I was tired. In the afternoon, I lied down and

⁷⁰ Serenades sung under the window

after that I went to the Vrbas alley with Plach, who came to pick me up. Here we met Jarakula and we decided to go to pick cherries. We met Bürger and Bijelić and the whole party went to Vorkapić and we took the boat across the river. We went to Starčević to pick the cherries. It was a nice day. The sun was shining. We came to the orchard, but we couldn't bother to climb the trees, so we bought a bag of cherries instead. We spoke with the peasants and they said: "What heroes these Montenegrins, only a handful of them, and they resist the Turks..." They are Serbs and they realize the value of schools. One of them attended school with Jarakula and told us that he was a veritable little devil. The peasants worry most of all because of the three-year army duty. A younger man said: "It is good to be ill when the recruiters come, and they leave you in peace", and another one joined: "Nope, I prefer to be healthy, come what may". We came back to the Vrbas River and Jarakula gave us a ride in a boat all the way to the town bridge. It's an easy life. Some of them were only in their swimming trunks, they swam in the river, climbed upon the boat, caught some fish, sang and engaged in all kinds of entertainment. Little Divjak jumped from the town bridge. As we passed across Alilovac, the boat almost capsized.



Graduates of the Banja Luka High School 1914. Ivan is sitting (second from the right).

Written math exam

I slept well. Yesterday we were curious to see the assignments that we will get, and to our great joy, we got three which Leinert had already given us. We were all happy. I did all the three assignments and showed them to others. We helped each other because the inspection was lax. Leinert was the inspector, and he was showing us what to do and helped everyone complete the assignment. Harazin, Maraković, Besenhofer and Harazin again. We couldn't hope for more. When we handed in our papers, the other pupils from the school broke into the room to see whether we had completed the most difficult subject. Afterwards, we took a walk, praising Leinert on our way.

A break and preparation for tomorrow's continuation of the written exam

After lunch, I slept like a log. Then Debossens came and we drank raspberry juice, and I relaxed some more, still with a full stomach. Then I corrected his homework about

airplanes, because we expect to get that topic at the exam. Luba hinted at something from modern technology, and we already had that topic once. Ante (Katović) composed his homework in Croatian and I translated it for him. I translated the homework for Jarakula the day before. Plach and I went to little Miss Franjić, and she wrote three questions for me. I got the fourth one today. After that I corrected Seid's homework. After dinner I was about to ask Luban how our homework came out, but I didn't find him. I escorted Ante Debossens home and returned.

Written exam in German – high school certificate

I slept well and was almost late for school. We sat in the room as instructed, the Director opened the envelope and Maraković read: *Luftschiffe und Flugversuche*. We all looked at one another with an ironic smile. He said three more points of exposition:

1. Geschichtliche Entwicklung
2. Luftschiffe Ballons
3. Flugapparate & ihre Erfolge.

I wrote a clean copy immediately and was done in an hour and a half. I had corrected a number of homeworks, although Pavičić and Skok were inspecting, until there was none to correct any more. Maraković and Leinert were still inspecting. Skok gave us our certificates, Kurtagić and I graduated with honors (for the first time my name will appear in the report with bold letters! Cheers! Although some of the success was a gift, actually). Others also got good certificates. These certificates are a stupidity. One should only say "passed" or "failed", and put an end to it. Because, if one is interested in a subject, and gets a bad mark, he loses the will to pursue it further. Also, there is the issue of envy. Nearly everyone finished before the time was up, and we took a walk. In the afternoon, I had a good sleep again and I paid Wolf 16 crowns for the ordered books. I still owe him 10 crowns because today I got *Englische Literaturgeschichte* (Göschel) and *Geschichte der Musik*.

Dad gave me 5 crowns for honors, and mom was so happy, she couldn't stop talking. I went to play tennis, but returned as the court was closed. I was waiting for Miss Latas until 5 p.m., and as she didn't come for the piano lesson, I went to the tennis court again. I played furiously for half an hour. Luban was there too, and we talked about the school assignments. He had examined nine papers by then, and when I asked him if anyone missed the topic, he said yes, to a point. I asked him if he had examined mine. He did. "And how did it come out?" "This is an official secret", and then in a low voice so no one could hear: "*A nous deux*." I knew it, I realized I shouldn't ask in front of the others. Tomorrow we are writing French. Graduation exam is a children's game. Some make a lot of fuss about it, others waste time in vain. Those five hours of work pass like a minute.

Transience of time – living for one's profession

In the evening, we got together, spoke about this day and the next and we realized how time flies with incredible speed. Things that we spoke about for so long, and with such an expectation, pass and tomorrow something new is on, and that is bound to pass too and soon there will be death. If life was only such a mechanical work as it was for the last few days, one should kill oneself, but when one stops, at once a feeling of Eternity and Love suffuses one's being, the feeling of beauty and fascination of life. I want to live for my beloved profession, even if I were an eternal pauper, and not to sweat in mechanical work, earn money and as a respected philistine⁷¹ lift the nose, pretending to be clever, serious and mystical while I am not. *Eviva l'arte!*

⁷¹ The original Croatian word is *filistar* – a limited person with a small-town mentality

Banja Luka, 19 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

The end of written graduation exams and rest in nature

The written part of the graduation exam is past. Yesterday we had an assignment in French – thirteen stanzas of Lamartine’s poem *L’Isolation*. Skok was writing on the blackboard never wanting to end, this is how long it was. During copying I knew all the new words. I must have made a dozen papers for others. We copied with indigo. If I am not mistaken, everyone except Mujagić translated the whole poem. In the afternoon, we went to pick cherries. Mujagić ferried us across the river together with Bijelić and Plach. Firstly, we climbed on the cabin of a peasant whom we saw the other day. He didn’t want to pick cherries for us, because the land-owner was expected to come to pick them. A peasant cannot sell anything if the land-owner doesn’t allow him. Serfdom is a difficult condition. They must work for others. We climbed more through the orchard and came to another house. A dirty peasant with a terrible goiter greeted us, and then a muddy meagre peasant woman. We asked for cherries and they brought us some. When we had eaten enough sitting on the grass, we asked how much it costs, and the woman said: “If you don’t want to pay, you don’t have to, and if you wish, you may leave as much as you want”. Good people. We paid and took the muddy road towards the Vrbas River.



Ivan (first on the left in a white suit) with colleagues on a picnic after passing the graduation exam. 12 July 1914

Meeting with girls, struggling with passion

Zelenika took in his boat some fat girl whom they call Baraba. We entered the boat, and she sat in such a manner that a large part of her leg could be seen. I was struggling, there was a terrible fight in me between Eternity and passion, and I could hardly wait for us to disembark. Passion directly halts logical thinking and I had a difficult time recollecting what my ideals were – o *Ewig-weibliches*, *memento mori*, work for mankind, esthetic feeling, etc.

That day I visited my little one and we talked. They – Misses Balhan, Franjić, Markezić and Vlašić call Ante “the little Antica” and me “the little Hansika”. In the evening, I wanted to escort her together with Ante, but we were cowards and the plan fell

through. This morning I slept until 9, and then went into the Vrbas barracks where Ante and Debossens read civics. We didn't learn a thing. It rains every day.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 21 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

About the graduation exam, a look into the future

Yesterday evening we tried to catch Maraković, on account of our graduation papers, and we succeeded. After Anto was with me at Miss Franjić's, we met Šandor and Šukan (Jarakula) and we saw Kurtagić on the corner (Imperial Road, Railway station, Balkan) standing with him, talking. Then the four of us split up; Ante and I went in front of the house. We found Zelenika. After waiting we met him, and he asked as always if this was a state of siege.⁷² He said that Bijelić could pass his German exam; he said something about other school issues. We thanked him and left. This morning I got up at 9 and went to Plach to see if there was any news about my poem in *Đački vjesnik*⁷³. None. I took a stroll through Borik and Banja Luka Field and I came home to study. I had a little quarrel with mother: her dreams are that I will go to Army Headquarters, which is against my principles. It is terrible when they make a choice for you, against your will. I did math a little, but I am not progressing at all. This is more interesting. I played piano. I practiced the *Serenade* by Moszkovski. I will learn it as best as I can. I will read a bit. I find it difficult when I cannot occupy myself with what I want. I had a walk with Grünwald and colleagues. They were pestering me about the graduation exam. Bürger told me that Ljuba was telling him how I went a little bit off the mark in my Croatian paper.

About the girl and love

I went to Miss Franjić in her shop and I was telling her about Đalski, Kumičić and Maraković's humoresques on the court. After that I had a walk with Ante and Šandor and Plach under her window. She was upstairs like a Đema⁷⁴. Is this love? It isn't. She doesn't know me. I don't know her. We never came to any intimacy. She is rather tied up, and so am I. It is not as it was with Greta who immediately expressed her feelings – but why do I keep coming back to her. She is not some great beauty. But she seems to possess a good nature. Tolstoy says: love is passion. All literature on love is based on this tenet. But there is no passion in me. Still, it is natural for a man to be attracted to a woman. Maybe it is the *Eternal female*⁷⁵ that pulls me, or some suggestive power, as Kleist says. It will probably be the latter because why does it keep pulling me to her. Or is the male nature – this strong and resilient nature – only one half of the essence, forever seeking the other part, an inborn tenderness and caressing. This remains an eternal riddle.

Contemplating the magnificence of the universe

It is a beautiful night. The immeasurable mechanism of the universe stands still. There are no strings or scaffolds, and still it stands there. With what speed this immeasurable expanse runs, while dust – a man – contemplates all that. Where does it all lead to? Why does man have a body when he is a soul in his essence? Why? Where? How? Eternal mysteries. Thought – spark – mind, this little spark of eternal Truth leads us toward elevated thoughts and lets us comprehend as much as we can; and what is the Immeasurable. When I think about this, I become dizzy. A flash, which a man cannot contemplate. *The Spirit of the Earth*⁷⁶, but not *an ugly face*⁷⁷; a flash of absolute Truth which the little spark cannot withstand.

⁷² German: Belagerungszustand

⁷³ Croatian: The Pupils' Gazettee

⁷⁴ A female character from literature which he read. A woman waiting for her suitor with dignity

⁷⁵ German: Das Ewig-weibliche

⁷⁶ German: Erdgeist

Banja Luka, 25 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Criticizes the girls' superficiality and comments their vocation in life and in the world

The other day at Sips's there was a Falcons' party. The falcons⁷⁸ did a good job exercising. The little one (Miss Franjić) was there and I danced a little with her. I escorted her home. The day before yesterday I was in her shop with Ante. She was especially beautiful. Miss Vlašić and she are good friends. They spoke about death. Both desire it. I wouldn't be surprised that one of them like Greta... they don't know why they live. Or, they spend the whole day at their work and think. They come to the conclusion that time passes and when death arrives, it seems as if you were just born. There is no idea that would support them in the world. They don't know that life is a sacrifice. They love each other, they are tender and gracious, but they don't know why they live. They ought to have some female organization for them to see what great mission they have among mankind (upbringing of children, supporting their husband, promoting the good, enthusiasm for some social work). They have no inkling that they are obliged to work for another, and not merely pursue pleasure. They – this is the female nature – would help everyone, but their reason doesn't tell them why. They believe in the Almighty, because their feeling tells them so. This is good. Why do they go to church? They don't know, but they like to see men in the church as well. Ante and I were closing the shop that evening and we escorted her home.

Making friends with works of literature

Every afternoon I work for about four hours. I am nearly done with maths. I read *Verlorene Liebesmüt*. Yesterday Ante and Debossens came to me and we worked together in the park. Novalis's *Anthem* did not appear in *Luč*, and they sent no notification of receipt. It is always stormy. Life like this is stupid. If I had money, I would study Shakespeare and send an essay to *Luč* for their jubilee.

Banja Luka, 28 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

The killing of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo

Terrible! I am making a break in my diary. Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne in Bosnia – in Bosnia – killed! His wife too! Where is the dream of the Croats!? The fate is pressing down on us. The ideals are broken, a poor young man stands and mourns. Killed by the "friends" of Slavs, the Serbs. His wife also dead. Barbarians!

Banja Luka, 29 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

A detailed account of the Sarajevo assassination

Yesterday I couldn't finish because my parents came. Everything is still secret, but I found out all. There was a whole Serbian plot against him. Firstly, they found a dynamite charge on the train from Metković. In Sarajevo, a bomb exploded and general Merici, if I am not mistaken, was seriously wounded. When Ferdinand found out about this, he rushed by car to the hospital to see him, and at once, near the bridge by the town hall, revolvers started shooting from all sides. He was wounded at first, then he leaned to the left, then she was wounded and she fell upon him. He lived for ten more minutes. They say an officer jumped on the pupil Princip who shot Ferdinand and tumbled down with him into the Miljacka River, and nearly drowned him. God! Along with that there were many innocent – small children – wounded, killed. Murder and utmost malice! What is the

⁷⁷ German: Abscheuliches Gesicht

⁷⁸ Falcon – SEE NOTE OF 3 May 1914

Prince Marko – the ideal of the whole mankind – doing? Dying. This mean plot is a symbol of Serbian mentality. One nation is good in its essence. Or not? Does hereditation apply to it? The future will decide. Is this plot a sign of striving for freedom? No way! Freedom is an ideal to which one aspires by honest means. If Ferdinand had been a tyrant, enemy of the Slavs, one wouldn't wonder, but he had the heart of a man. The Czechs and Croats loved him more than anyone else, and now their hopes disappeared like smoke. Those who say they are one with the Croats – the Serbs – destroyed everything. What do they deserve? History will judge them. This excessive egoism, Nietzsche's nature without faith, it will all bring about appropriate fruit. The age of the French Revolution will come to Bosnia. Egoistic people will instigate the people under the guise of freedom. A mutual butchery will start. Animals! – *The human beast*⁷⁹ will rise: *He calls it Reason, but only uses it to be more a beast than any beast as yet.* I also heard that Catholics and Muslims – the Croats – joined forces and demonstrated against the Serbs destroying the Hotel Europa and other.



Franz Ferdinand and wife Sophia in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 entering a car immediately prior to the assassination.

Behavior of the Serbs after the assassination

An exemplary organization of Serbs has spread its network all over Bosnia. And here is some kind of centre. The Orthodox bishop of Banja Luka got the order – God knows why – to flee from here. Supposedly a demonstration is being planned. The army is on the alert.

An even greater contempt grabs you when you know that yesterday was St. Vitus' Day. There was a Falcon provincial rally organized.⁸⁰ They exercised since 6 a.m. With the 9 o'clock train around 1,500 peasants arrived. Among these were the "blood brothers", peasant Falcons anti-alcoholics. It was nice. The Falcons came from Zagreb too. They had their own music and organized a procession of some 3,000 people, peasants, Falcons, peasant women, children, citizens which paraded through the town, etc. Ahead of every peasant group was an Orthodox priest. One had a Falcon cap instead of a priest's. It was an impressive procession, but terribly dead. Usually there is singing on these festivities. When it became known, everything broke up and all the peasants were sent home by train. What is most odd, all of them had a *black ribbon*⁸¹. Where did they get them when the

⁷⁹ French: Bête humaine

⁸⁰ Falcon, see note in the Diary of 3 May 1914

⁸¹ German: *Trauerflor* – a sign of mourning for the deceased worn on the suit

shops are closed? They already carried them along. It was so brilliantly organized that they knew Ferdinand would be killed and therefore they came here perhaps to stage a mutiny. Also in Brno, there was a mutiny. But the biggest irony of all was Croatian flags which the Serbs unfolded on the exercise grounds and in front of the railway station. To kill a friend of the Croats, and as a sign of friendship to unfold Croatian flags! Irony! Where then is sincerity and love?! From this chaos, Truth will emerge unscathed. Where is Christ, whom His enemies crucified and who gives the Light of the Truth? He will lead his followers out from the chaos.

History is the struggle for Truth!



Assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

Banja Luka, 30 June 1914 – (17 years and 6 months)

Events after the Sarajevo tragedy, reactions among the people

This morning I found out from the newspapers that everything I heard yesterday was true. My father also told me that the Montenegrins and Serbs created a *de facto* union. Petar and Nikita are not in Montenegro, to give the impression that the plan for the assassination was prepared without their knowledge and to break out across the border, thinking that the entire army is engaged in manoeuvres. They were wrong. Potiarek sent the Jäger (Hunters) and said: “Kill everybody without excuse”⁸² As a military man he must have pangs of conscience that partly due to his fault his future emperor was killed. This evening the Muslim Croats and Catholic Croats are organizing a meeting to decide how to publicly express their sorrow. But it seems that the destruction of the *Balkans*⁸³ is in preparation and that they are getting ready for butchering with the Serbs. The pupils – the trustworthy ones – have been invited. This doesn’t smell good. To show publicly that they are dissatisfied with the Serbs, but not to destroy. This is not positive work. Evil must be overcome with good.

⁸² German: Alles ohne Pardon niedermachen

⁸³ A Serbian institution in Banja Luka.

I am not nervous any more, I realized: Political poem, phooey, an abominable poem⁸⁴. You cannot arrive at anything by nervousness and hatred. An absolutely evil character exists only in phantasy, not in reality. The Serbs acted meanly, but it doesn't follow that all of them are evil. Otherwise, they couldn't have created wonderful epics – of an ethical nature – about the Prince Marko.



Arrest of Gavrilo Princip immediately after the assassination in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

Work for the graduation exam, girls

This morning I was at Ante's. In the afternoon, I learned the *Alps* and lay down. Maraković gave Ante the text that he will ask him. He is too good. I wrote it for him. For Debossens I made the comparison between Lazarević's and Goethe's *Werther*. A fresh copy of *Luč* came to me and I composed a poem in Debossens's name for his darling Miss Balijan. Ante and I gave it to my little one and said – spurted out – that Šandor wrote this for his darling, and that we found it accidentally. The little one – Miss Franjić – will give it to Miss Balijan.

God, give me strength not to be low-spirited.

Banja Luka, 2 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Continuing preparations for the graduation exam

Yesterday and today – morning and afternoon – I worked and completed geography and nearly all of the civics. But I still don't know it. The graduation exam is on the 10th of July. Here a court martial has been declared. Standing on the carriage, Rosman – the guard and soldier – blowed on the trumpet or beat the drums and read the Declaration. During the day, it doesn't matter, but at night it is unpleasant. One cannot utter a single word. Maraković gave Burzić the text, and confided only to me: from Precko's novels. I don't

⁸⁴ German: Ein politisches Lied, pfui, ein garstig Lied

know if he is doing well. He is helping Burzić, but I have the feeling he made a pledge not to give off any secrets. But, as he never committed any evil and always did only the best and most noble, I gather he knows why he is doing that. I wrote up the assignments for Burzić, Katović and Debossens.

In the afternoon, I walked and waited for Luban, but I didn't find him. I think a year has passed since his mother died. Quickly, how terribly quickly time passes. The same is with Greta. But about her the next time...

Banja Luka, 4 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Contemplation about the universe, man and God

Nine o'clock has passed. The train arrived, and I said farewell to my friends Katović and Anto. The rain was pouring outside, and the clock ticked tic-tac, tic-tac. I reflected. One year ago, the earth was in the same place in the universe. But, as soon as I have written this, it has travelled an enormous path and it always gallops and whistles through the universe, at an enormous speed and it takes it a whole year until it completes its journey. Our small earth, and us, these tiny people, tinier than the smallest of worms. We look upon it through a magnifying glass and we see it moving. This incredibly small thing is an organism which moves, feeds and has its purpose. And we, huge people, never care about these myriads of tiny organisms. But, what is eternity? Man and worm is not a good comparison – it is no comparison at all. The worm and the whole earth. This is too little, too. The worm and the universe, maybe. Yes, this is the real one. What is man the worm compared to the universe? The body is the worm, but man is not the body, there is something invisible in him which forgets about the body. His spark – an infinitesimal part of His spark, but still it is from Him. And this fragment gives us the power to conclude about the whole universe, about infinity, even about Him. This is wondrous.

Remembering the first love and a critical review of Greta and her life

Elevated by wonderful harmony, by melodies I feel but do not hear, by images I know though I have never seen them, I now think of my first love. What a fall from Eternity into transience. Everything that might have been evil in that and transient has gone, while the exalted and noble part still lives in my heart, elevates it and feeds it, maybe even sows a good seed. You Almighty, please, let it be so! Maybe at that moment she breathed her last breath. I didn't even know of it. I fervently prayed to God to keep her alive and was convinced in the success of my prayer, but it was too late. She has already ceased to be. Her soul has rid itself of the transience and went. Where to? Into eternity, but God, I am overcome with horror when I think that she took her own life. Life is a struggle for Truth, and she cowardly withdrew from this struggle. She was a child of the 20th century, of lenient views. If she were alive now, maybe everything would be different, maybe not. Maybe I would still be a child of the 20th century. Who knows? The Almighty directs everything in the best way.

The first love is the deepest, and therefore, this memory is sacred for me. I didn't take flowers to the cemetery because the feelings would grow dull if exposed to the world. Her father and mother are crying, maybe, and I feel heaviness when I bring the images into my memory. She was smarter than her companions, she always read books and was enthusiastic about reading. But no one gave her the depth. Her life was drifting away monotonously, she was thinking of every new day how it comes and goes, and she waited for it to pass. Maybe she would have gotten married, had children and died. Life is like that. She didn't know why she lived. Maybe she didn't even know that there is an Eternity and that all the wonders of the world, all nature lead us to the awareness that an Immeasurable Spirit created all that, from the Ideals of mankind to Truth, Goodness, Beauty. It is all past now, I will pass too, and everything around me, but we will all still

be. Maybe she is! I am enveloped by darkness when I think that she might have lost Eternity. God, merciful God, hear the prayer of this weak little worm who fears to look at You, whose heart is being poisoned by the devil, o give, you Eternal God, give Greta Eternity! Forgive me all my evil and show me the way of righteousness.

A spiritual comment on the political situation after the Sarajevo assassination

Let's get back to the people. Life is a struggle for Truth, and so let us look at it. The graduation exam is on the 10th of July. I learned most of the civics. Today I didn't work, because I attended the *Requiem* for Ferdinand. A lot of people, and there were Muslims, too. A cross versus the crescent moon! Thirty years ago, they would kill every Muslim if he entered a church, and now they are all getting together. God giving, it will be "one herd and one shepherd". This will come with the centuries. No one went to the Orthodox Church, and at 12 there was a service in the mosque. Muslims – Bosnian soldiers – were led by the Lieutenant, a Muslim. Wonderful. If they only received support, and not followed the stupid Austrian politics. By giving them the schools, etc., they would get to be the best of friends, otherwise the most bitter of enemies. This is their nature.

In the afternoon, I was in the convent school and I took a ride in a boat with Seid and Plach. Beautiful. Then we talked for a long time in Seid's office. Alić was also there. We debated politics. His conclusions are healthy, but he is imbued with the anti-dynastical spirit, without himself knowing why. He could be led on the right track, because he is amenable to deeper thinking. All of them are anarchic. For them to commit an assassination is nothing at all, and they do not consider that evil must be overcome by good if one wants to work for the Truth. "Who hits you with a stone, you hit him with bread". I could see that he is fond of me, and he is sorry to see that we had just gotten to know each other and already we are being separated. That's life.

I walked with Ante and Debossens. I saw my little one and her long hair. I asked her about the poem and she told me that Miss Ballian was angry. Her mother doesn't let me escort her. I gave *Täugenlitz* to Miss Vlašić, so she could learn German. In the evening, I took a walk with Bürger. He is still good as he was before, but he has changed. I remember the time when he was proving Christian ethics to me and its grandeur, and now he tells me that he would kiss a girl. Innocent though he is, this is what he says.

Yesterday Ljuba went to Zagreb. I spoke about Ante and he told me he would give me something to read about Turgenjev (maturation exam in German). I am tired. Good night.

Banja Luka, 6 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Graduation exam is getting closer, various reviews of daily events

Time flies with terrible speed. Almost twenty days have passed since the written graduation exam, and I have the feeling it was yesterday. Every day I worked quite a lot, and nothing was done in the end. And there wasn't so much to do. Yesterday I repeated civics with Ante and Šandor and I know it. I am done with it. Today I repeated mechanics and in the afternoon in the park with Bürger some physics. But I didn't really learn it. Tomorrow and after tomorrow I will do physics and math, the things I don't know, on Thursday geography and history, and on Friday it is the first day of the exam. My turn is on Saturday. I believe I will face this nuisance in cold blood. During the twenty days, I could have studied Shakespeare through and through and received moral support. This monotonous work kills a man. I didn't talk a lot with the little one. I went to her with Bürger to have my sour milk. There wasn't any. Miss Ballian gave Šandor the poem and they teased each other. I feel stupid. "The wonderful moonlight shines..." On the day when they killed Ferdinand, Andor Stern was there too. A financial aristocrat. A man of his era. Every one of his thoughts has an erotic element.

I am incapable of thinking. I would like to spend the whole day on a boat, swimming, singing, jumping and get rid of “majestic” books. Men of letters are not the books, they are the reflection of beauty and nature. Like nature, they lead you to metaphysics.

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 8 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Transiency in love, plans for the vacation

Life – work. This work is stupid. This life is pretty stupid anyhow, but still dear. Yesterday and today I worked the whole day (six hours) and completed physics. Tomorrow morning I will complete geography and history. With that I am done with the preparation for the graduation exam. In other words, it took me half a day longer than I had planned.

I come every day to Salvator Street where my little one walks with Miss Vlašić. We pass beside each other, but I cannot join them on account of her mother. I love her although I don't know her. All of this is transient. It is difficult to find anything that I loved as much as I loved Greta, and even that has passed, I have memories, it ennobled me, but one can live even without it. My diary is my only memory of the poetry in the midst of this stupid work. I will go to the seaside. Where, I don't know. I would prefer to go to a place where they speak only French. Alaupović is coming tomorrow with a car. The Director told us, the high school graduates, to greet him.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 9 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

End of preparations for the graduation exam, visiting a girl

In the morning, I finished geography, I just leafed through it; therefore, I don't know it. I tested Ante's German (Nobel Prize, Sienkiewicz, Romanticism) and his knowledge is excellent. In the afternoon, I took a bath. At 5 p.m. inspector Alaupović came, and we greeted him. I went to see my little one before the arrival of his car, and I went to her in the evening too. She read *The Spring Waters, Taras Bulba*. She is beautiful. It was raining. Ante is afraid of German. I am not, because I am aware that I did even too much.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 11 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Graduation exam is over

Finally, the end⁸⁵. I graduated. I got rid of the worry, but... I cried at noon. God only knows why. A new step. The childhood is over. Great duties lie ahead. Ideals become real issues. Life will pass too.

Banja Luka, 12 July 1914, 2 a.m. – (17 years and 7 months)

A touching farewell to teachers and colleagues

This is probably the most beautiful and the saddest day of my life. Sadness prevails over gladness. I grew up with my colleagues, for eight years we have been together and now we celebrate the separation. It is almost hard to believe. It was hard to part with the teachers, too. Especially with Ljubo. We were all one body and one mind, we knew each other and we blossomed one beside the other. Therefore, we understand each other best. Everything will pass, but some memories will remain with us for as long as we live. When we shall meet as old men, there will be a tear or two in our eyes. Life is like that. A

⁸⁵ Latin: Finis finaliter

strange riddle. He explained all that and this is how it must be. A cup of honey must be full of bile, too. A detailed description follows when I am calm.

Banja Luka, Friday, 17 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

A detailed account of the graduation exam

Today at 5 p.m. I am leaving for Abbazia – Opatija and therefore I hurry to write what I neglected earlier.

The first day of the graduation exam was 10th of July, Friday – a full week from today. In the morning, the turn came for Bijelić, Bürger and Burzić. The exam took place in the class 2a (...). I got up earlier than usual and we all waited in the corridor beside the school administration. The inspector was late, of course. When he finally arrived, the whole commission – Ljuba, Alaupović, the Director, Harazin, Pavičić, Leinert – entered inside. They conferred for almost an hour, and we were waiting impatiently outside. Finally, the door opened and we were called in. The room made a strange impression on us (...).

(In continuation Merz gives a detailed account of his graduation exam, as well as that of his colleagues, full of detailed observations and events that occurred as the exam progressed.)

Opatija 19 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Train ride to take a rest in Opatija, parental love

I break the order of my diary, because otherwise I couldn't describe my impressions. On July 17th at 5 p.m. I set off on a train. Mom and dad made up their mind regarding my journey when they found out that Mrs. Teschner is coming too. They telegraphed to inquire if there is a spare room and when they found out that there is one at a price of 9 crowns, they sent me.

I kissed my mom, and my dad. Real kisses. I could feel all this love in them. We looked at each other once more and we kissed again. How sweet this parental love is. Love is stronger than hatred or fear. Hossana to Christ whom I insult so much.

In the train compartment, there was a lady with a small girl. We laughed all the time, the child and me, when we saw that we were a match for each other. In Prijedor I saw Joso. He asked me about our last evening together. In Dobrljin I spoke to Marjanović and he was again complaining of his career; in September, he is getting a post in Bosnian railways. From Dobrljin until Zagreb I dozed off. At midnight, I switched to the train for Rijeka. Everything was full and I stood the whole night in the wagon corridor. It was terrible, one couldn't properly sit, nor walk. I had a difficult time until morning. There were girls – especially one, chestnut brown eyes, full face, round, a bit pale, with long eyebrows – she took my attention. She put one leg up on the heating tube so that, along with her mild innocent face she looked rather heroic. It was a dream, she is there no more. Two young ladies, one of them ugly, entered 2 hours before Rijeka. The ugly one talked in detail about her sister and her love affair with a certain Marko, etc, and envy was coming out from her every word. I arrived in Rijeka at 7 a.m., took my suitcase and one Croat, seeing that I don't know my way, took me to the coast. I took a coffee in the coffee shop and went to the ticket office where one could see the nationalities of all kinds. With some luck, I got the ticket and proceeded to the steamboat. It was raining, and a terrible wind was blowing. Later I went into the salon. In Opatija, a servant took me to Pansion

Lederer.⁸⁶ Here the senior waiter, a philistine⁸⁷, an arrogant young man told me he had a room for 14 crowns. I was shocked. With pains, I got one for 10 crowns.



Ivan in a boat (first to the left) during holidays in Opatija, July 1914.

Opatija, Pansion Lederer (Habsburg), room No. 96
19 July 1914, 21.45 hours – (17 years and 7 months)

Vacation in Opatija

At the first moment, I felt terrible. I was worried for having to pay so much, and on the other hand, I heard all around me the splutter of the stupid Hungarian financial aristocracy – Jews. I was looking for someone I might know, but there was no one. It was only on the second day that I noticed my distant relative Mr. Lochner playing in an orchestra. I strolled with him twice and he gave me some useful advice. He is strongly against the Slavs. He says – Opatija was built by Germans, Croats didn't give a cent.⁸⁸ This is true, but from this it doesn't proceed that Opatija is German. This is the ancient land of the Croats and they couldn't build it because they had no money. It is normal that they want it back, and it should suffice for the Germans to be able, as compensation, to build German schools on Croatian soil.

Yesterday I took a boat ride, and in the evening I was in the *Quarner* guesthouse with Krudil, a pupil from Gorica whom Mr. Lochner introduced to me. A nice chap. Today I got up at 10, went to swim until noon, had lunch, slept, went on foot to Lovran and back, listened to the phonograph, had dinner, went to my room, wrote five postcards: home, to Burzić, Bijelić, Georg and Seid. I do this every evening. Today I received cards from Šandor and dad.

⁸⁶ Pansion *Lederer* – Today this is the Hotel *Agava* in Opatija (M.Tita Street 89). On the lateral side of the hotel, the *Brotherhood of the Croatian Dragon*, Rijeka-Opatija Branch, placed in 2007 a marble plate with the inscription in memory of the bl. Ivan Merz who stayed in this pension for ten days at his vacation in July 1914.

⁸⁷ See note of 19 June 1914

⁸⁸ Croatian: filir



*Pension Lederer, today's Hotel Agava
in which Ivan stayed while he was in Opatija.*



*Commemorative plate put up by the Brothers of the Croatian Dragon in 2007
on the Hotel Agava (former pension Lederer) in memory of Merz's stay in Opatija.*

Opatija, 22 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Swimming, walking, remembering Greta, prayer to Mary

I got up at 9, sunbathed a lot, and got a suntan. On the beach the erotic element has a strong impact on me. I see that instinct is a terrible thing, it could throw all my ideology into the mud, and still it raises its head on every occasion. When I ask the Virgin to help me, she helps me a lot, but the instinct keeps coming back. Sojourn here is pleasant for the body, but people think too much of the body. All they think about is when they are going to eat, sleep, where to go now, what to do later. The sea is extraordinarily beautiful, but it is hard to enjoy it all by myself. If there was only somebody here who understands me. I

always remember Greta. Whenever I see a girl smiling with a guy, I find it hard to bear. The likeness of Greta I will never find. And even if I found one, the memory of Greta would cast a shadow on this relationship and it wouldn't be so deep, so sincere. After swimming (at a cost of 1.58 crowns including milk), I went to the *Lokey* guesthouse for a lemonade, and then to lunch. In the afternoon, I slept, then went to Kuruzmica, had ice-cream, and met Krutil, the pupil from Gorica, took a boat ride with Mr. Lochner and Krausz. After that I bought the photographs, had dinner and returned home.

Strewn about on the table were the postcards which I wrote home, to Joco, Kulenović, König, Bürger, Šerbetić.

Opatija, 23 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Critical towards immoral behavior

I got up around 9. The postman woke me up. I got 100 crowns from dad, and secretly 10 crowns from mom. She sent it to me because she wants me to have a good time – my good mom! I will never be as good. The sky was overcast, and the waves were propping up rushing toward the coast. There they hit the cavities in the rocks and were forced back to meet the oncoming waves, and at once there was only a lot of foam. I didn't swim today but took a walk to Kuruzmica. In the Andolina beach I saw the liberalism of morals. A man grabbed a black and beautiful woman... He was not ashamed of the world and everybody laughed. And with all that, she sat on his leg, etc. Someone played a Wagner's melody solo when the rain started and everybody scrambled for cover.

Inspiration in nature for his poem *Storm*, the only poem which remains preserved in his heritage

I came home, and a terrible storm appeared. To spend the time until lunch I took Heine's *Nordsee* and read a beautiful *Sturm, Thalatte* and one more. In each one of them the picture at the beginning is exquisite, but by the end he stops painting and casts in verse his mythological knowledge and his sarcasm. I also got the idea to try myself out like Heine in free verse and I know that my rhythm is occasionally scandalous. For the purpose of versification one ought to start like Heine, with the easiest verses.

S T O R M

I sit alone by the window
And gloomily I look at the flashes of lightning
Which appear and disappear
With roar and thunder.
The winds howl
And chase one another like phantoms
And strike powerfully
At my windowpane.
The spirits of storm lose their power now
And run effervescent somewhere far away
A cloud gathers
Showering a cold downpour
On the lush green of the trees
Which shiver moving left to right
And bend
Only to rise boldly again.
Then the sky starts to appear
And the blue cover

Starts to show its pure face
And I open my window.
Look – what scent now fills the room!
I long to breathe it all in,
My lungs are filled with the freshness
And the human heart after the storm,
Is born again like a charming sun.⁸⁹

Refusal of eroticism

Lunch was bad. We were served stinking meat. Along with that, there was a long wait between dishes, so that the waiters were greeted with applause when they appeared. Everybody was pointing to a Bosniak, a Muslim. There was noise, applause, disrespect. Everybody was saying Tözek, Tözek⁹⁰. A Turk, though he is a Croat – but it would be a shame to say he is a Croat. I slept until five, and taking a walk ran into Moska Poljokan. He was glad to see me, and so was I. When he saw a navy boat, he sighed – technology, technology. He started to speak erotically and I asked him to stop. He saw Kodaks in a shop and wanted to ask for the price. He was wrong. He entered at the wrong door into a store selling underwear. This is just like him.⁹¹ I wrote postcards home, to Carlo, Siebenaciger, Kurtagić, Kušnić and Jarakula. I wrote to all the colleagues. Tomorrow I plan to write to Ljuba. There is storm outside.

Opatija, 25 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Announcement of war, political situation in Europe, spiritual review

Yesterday I sent ten postcards (Kobsa, Kajnovchy, Ljuba, Nappey, Lanka, home, Alica, Debossens, Aranka, and Inuš) and today one to Pajić. I almost forgot him. With this I am done with writing. Yesterday I went for a swim and I lay down in the afternoon. I cannot sleep during the day, and not much during the night either, because it is hot in the room. In the afternoon, I met Lochner, and walking around he told me about his work. He is a good man. I met the young Bahtijarević, formerly from Banja Luka, and now attending trade school in Sarajevo. Elegantly dressed, like an aristocrat, red shoes, etc. I was glad, and so was he, that we met. Today I roasted myself in the sun. I got a suntan, but it's a pity that I am still very thin.

After the beach, I came to lunch, and a young lady sitting next to me said that probably there would be a war. It was like lightning from a clear sky. I had forgotten politics completely. War with Serbia. Only now I remembered hearing the Hungarians speak “ultimatum, Serbs, bombs, etc.”, but I did not comprehend why. After lunch, I rushed to buy the *Neues Wiener Journal*. In bold letters it said that an ultimatum was delivered. There were a lot of phrases inside, but also a great amount of deep and justified feelings. It is evident that the politics of Serbian leaders is brutal egoism whose victims are crown princes and others. It is a pity that this egoism has penetrated into the Serbian people, who are basically noble, with Prince Marko and Fairy Radoijla as their ideals. Now, this egoism is being taken as something sacred – going from one evil to another. History is a fight for truth, I repeat, five million evils struggle for one grain of truth. You get this grain of truth, but then there are new evils which you must fight. Prince Marko is asleep. No one listens to Christ, although he lives in the minds of deeper people. Our

⁸⁹ This is the only Merz's poem which is preserved thanks to the fact that it was written in the Diary. The others are lost. This poem entitled Storm he wrote in German. Here we print an English translation. It was translated into Croatian by Professor Ivan Macan, SJ

⁹⁰ Hungarian: Turk, Turk

⁹¹ German: Das sieht im ähnlich (E.g..this is how he behaves in other situations as well)

Monarchy has a lot to blame, but if we would like to take a straight road, an even greater evil would occupy us, because the opposing side doesn't have the slightest intention to pursue the right road. I read *Figaro* and it is terribly chauvinistic. It takes a stand with the Serbs. It says: Austria, instead of protesting because of the assassination, makes political and economic moves which are unrelated to the Sarajevo event. Then it threatens saying that France and Russia are on the Serbian side and that a larger confrontation looms. If they only knew – and maybe they do know – how terrible the politics of Great Serbia is – they conduct their politics in the most frightening way, by assassinations, spreading of pamphlets, sending bombs, vulgar education of the youth.

In the afternoon, I lay down, and then went to listen to the music. I met Bahrijarević, and later his brother Faik and the humpbacked one – womanizers. But I always steered the conversation elsewhere. I walked with Bahtijarević while the music was playing, and we liked what we saw, and they liked us too; a Croatian girl of beautiful and intelligent appearance. We laughed. But she vanished. Later we went along the seaside, looked into the air and teased people. Now I have sent the postcard home. Until now I have spent 96 crowns (for 8 days).

Opatija, Sunday, 26 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Spiritual reflections on the state of war, visit to the church

The impossible is happening. We are already at war. No one expected this from Austria. How energetic. Surely, the Count Tisza⁹² must have his fingers in this. It is just to punish the egoism and brutality of the Serbs, but Europe could have done it. Barbarism of the 20th century is greater than its culture. Instead of solving this in several days, it seems now that the egoism of the nations will lead to a world war. From this war, Truth will emerge unscathed. Everything will pass – but My Words shall not pass; but there will be many new evils. Again, after that, one side will fight for the rights of the righteous, but they will do it by evil means, and all over again. A new evil should be plowed over with a plough that cuts deep inside the ground, not with something that merely slides on the surface (Turgenev). This morning I went to church, but it was packed and people were standing outside. I couldn't follow the Mass from outside, so I left. Which means, two Sundays without the holy Mass. I myself am a lot to blame. I could have gone there earlier.

War disrupted his vacation, uncertainty

I found out that the war is on. The Serbs didn't accept the ultimatum. They have the Russians behind their back. Some say that trains are not running, some say they are. I didn't know where to go. I cannot stay here because of my parents. They are worried. If the trains are not running, I will go to Bohemia. I sent an express card home and told them this; to be certain, I went to Rijeka and here everybody was crowding around the man selling newspapers. Here I found out that the passenger trains are going in all directions. I returned to Opatija, just in time for the music. They played

Radetzky March, Tzarevska and other pieces. One guy didn't take his hat off and they slapped him all over. The same was during the morning. The passions are high. Stink

⁹²Count István TISZA of Borosjenő and Szeged (1861 –1918), Hungarian politician, Prime Minister of the Hungarian government from 1903 until 1905, and from 1913 until 1917. His second mandate was marked by the entry of Austria-Hungary into World War I, although he himself was against attacking the Serbian Kingdom. He presided over the government until 1917. He survived several assassination attempts, but was killed in the end by a soldier in his house in Budapest on 31 October 1918.

of the 20th century culture. I met the Bahtijarevićs and Mrs. Trdak and Bahtijarević took a photo of us. She has been here for two months and now travels with me to Banja Luka. I am leaving tomorrow morning at 7. I have 30 crowns. So, 23 crowns is the price of the apartment, and I gave 11 crowns as a tip.

Zagreb, 31 July 1914 – (17 years and 7 months)

Departure from Opatija, everywhere crowds due to war

Mrs. Trdak didn't come on the steamship. I went by myself. In Rijeka I jumped into a full tram and headed for the Railway station. Everything was crowded. Some women, Serbians, pushed their way through rudely and asked for tickets for Belgrade. The train was entirely full. People were rushing into the wagons, fighting, pushing, shouting, and women were in despair. I watched. People are truly Nietzschean. They push one another to get a better place, but this system of Nietzsche's proved to be a bit unpractical, because there were non-egoists among the people who helped the vulnerable ones and stopped the rude ones who wanted to get a place at any cost. This is a picture of life itself. In the words of Goethe, *Only the laws can give us freedom*⁹³. They – the laws – determine the path for us to follow in order not to come into opposition with others and on which we can develop immeasurably. Such is also the Christian faith. It is a moral law for us and it opens the immeasurable path which is just and shields us from coming into opposition with the good. The wagon was full to overflowing and we stood in the corridor. We waited for a long time for the train to leave, full of soldiers. Some arrogant Jewish boys quickly found a place for themselves, while the women and children had to stand. When I got tired, I went to the toilet and there sat on a bench. Later I went to the dining car, had a good lunch, and pushing my way back through the wagon came upon Malvić. In the afternoon, I arrived in Zagreb and left the luggage in the left-luggage office.

Zagreb, 2 August 1914 – (17 years and 8 months)

*Reactions of the citizens in Zagreb to war,
demolishing of Serbian buildings and institutions*

I immediately went to Mrs. Teschner's to tell her not to go to Opatija. She was sleeping when I came, and Mrs. Supanek received me. The unmarried husband of this lady was drafted into the army, and there is rush in the house. I went for a walk with Mrs. Teschner. At once, in the Ilica Street someone shouted: "The Serbs are demolishing." We were startled, and then they clarified it and said that the crowd was demolishing the Serbs. We hurried to the Jelačić Square where the crowd had gathered and saw the fire burning in Nikolić's store, while some lads threw stones and kicked at the store. I was horrified: it means that the Croats, when the Serbs are in danger, destroy them. But the crowd was elated. When the firefighters arrived with a nozzle, they didn't let them extinguish the fire. As a matter of fact, they threw all the stuff out of the store and set it aflame. The army came and everybody vanished. When they realized that the army wouldn't take any action, the crowd shouted: "Long live the army." Then they went into the People's Coffee Room, threw the chairs onto a pile, broke the doors and set it all aflame. On the monument and around it the people lined up and looked at the things burning. Women were happily throwing the chairs into the fire, and men broke the doors with shovels and legs and threw all of it into the fire.

Then the crowd left while the kids shouted: "Down with the Serbian murderers". They went toward the bank and Čuk. Čuk was destroyed in an instant. Metal window covers were torn up like paper. The bank was bombarded for a long time. They threw

⁹³ German: "Nur Gesetze können uns die Freiheit geben"

shovels up toward the windows, and whenever a glass was shattered, the crowd roared with pleasure. They threw large stones at the doors. Some rabid people, blood flowing all over them, were banging their fists at the shop windows, climbed on the doors, unlocked, descended, and again kicked at the green venetian blinds on the first floor. When the outpour of rage was over, the army came, but people already gathered at the Serbian Falcon and threw large stones at the shutters. Somehow, they managed to get inside and they pulled all the new chairs, piano and other furniture onto a pile and set it aflame. Everything burnt up. The army blocked all the streets, and the people receded toward the Zrinjski square where they demolished the Drobac's shop. At that moment, martial law was declared in Zagreb, and the people gradually grew quiet. After that I went with Mrs. Teschner toward the Railway station (she paid for my dinner at *Jägernhorn*) to escort her friend's lover. Today he passed the second state exam and is already on his way to the Russian border. He is a Serb, but nevertheless he goes. He doesn't look very intelligent to me: he doesn't know who Schönflug⁹⁴ is. The whole station was full of soldiers and he kissed us farewell. It wasn't easy for him. Both Mrs. Supanek and Mrs. Teschner cried. Another woman cried with terrible gestures and at first it seemed that she was laughing. I escorted them and we looked at the debris. A carriage passed by the Drobac's shop and the coachman said the sausages were braking the carriage. People were all around us, while the army stood guard in front of the Starčević home⁹⁵ and in front of the Maraković house. What contrasts.

At first I wasn't approving the demolition, but now I see that it is an outpouring of the Croats' sincere nature. They know that the commissariat was introduced for the sake of the Serbs, that the people whom they demolished are Serbian disseminators, that bombs were found in some of the shops, and they poured out their rage in such a way, destroying their material possessions. True, there were people here eager to fill their pockets. They did not harass anyone in person. They were enthusiastic about the fight and shouted: "Long live the Croatian king Franz Joseph, long live the army, long live the Croatian army" and other things.

Critical view of the attitudes of Greta's mother

When I had escorted the ladies in the rain, a woman passed by and raised her skirt so that a lot could be seen. I turned instinctively and they started to talk about the erotic, and that I am going to change, in that manner. It was hard for me to hear such things from Greta's mother whom I love a lot, but I see that this single erotic element in the upbringing of her daughter killed a natural religious life in her, so that she opted for suicide. The mentality is this: I live from day to day, I allow myself erotic thoughts, I live from day to day, without prayer and thoughts of eternity and life loses its purpose. Why not kill oneself, one then asks at the moment of resignation and one can really do it. We parted and I proceeded toward the Railway station and found Malvić and Mrs. Trdak. She in a red dress was sitting with a young lad. She loves him. When we were alone, I could see that he is a fanatic enemy of the Serbs, though I had thought he was a decent lad. Immediately after, he switched onto the erotic. I see where's the point.

Return to Banja Luka

We entered the train and Dr. Panzal (army) was also going to Banja Luka. We slept as we could. We got out in Sunja to get some coffee. In Dobrljin I found out that mother departed to Opatija on account of my being there. I got off at Ivanjska because dad was transferred there. He is fine. Firstly, we spoke about mother and I should have gone the

⁹⁴ Fritz SCHÖNPFLUG (1873–1951), Austrian painter, caricaturist, graphic artist, the author of artistic postcards

⁹⁵ In this place, the Starčević home, opposite the Main railway station, Ivan Merz lived with his parents on the 2nd floor from 1919 until his death in 1928.

next day to fetch her in Opatija, but I decided instead to wait for her return. I slept there and the next day I came here. Everything is as it was. But, the army is gathering. Mom came the next day by train and told us she had suffered terribly. Being so nervous she ate nothing at all, she was only looking forward to seeing me, asked the waiter and I was not there. She went home immediately, carrying heavy suitcases by herself toward the train. She had to sit outside where she was trampled upon, and women told her the waiter must have deceived her, that I was still in Opatija. She cried for making this whole trip in vain and thought she might never see me again because they told her she had been drafted into the army in 1896. She was happy when she came home, but she is still a bit nervous.

Banja Luka, 3 August 1914 – (17 years and 8 months)

Social and political situation in Banja Luka after the outbreak of war

War was declared upon Serbia and therefore I wish to portray the colors of the town at this time. The reservists and the draftees came from the villages by trains and carriages. Around 4000 peasant carriages gathered on the Banja Luka Field and every day they go towards Mostar. Reservists and draftees are situated in the high school building, girls' school and the Orthodox school. The peasants gathered around the church and they sang, went to fetch food, write down the names. Among them were Bogdan Babić, Poljokan, Izrael, etc. The day before yesterday they departed to Gradac. As bombs and other compromising material was found among the Serbs and as some of them are obviously traitors, a large number of Serbs in the town have been arrested. The organization of the break-off from Austria was exemplary. Only now materials were found which show that one day all the non-Serbs would be slaughtered here. Zarić, Mirković, Dabić, Glušac, Popović, Kostić and others like Škarić are under arrest. As a matter of fact, Dr. Kumanović, our Director of whom everyone thought as loyal was also locked up as a traitor. It is known that he knew of the assembly on the Zrinski-Frankopan day (30 April 1914) and that he didn't report it. As this assembly was anti-dynastic, the leaders Jarakula and Kurtagić whom they brought from Vlasenica now lie in prison. Jarakula wanted to talk some Croats into this, but without success. Bürger is imprisoned though innocent. He didn't think that "Yugoslavia" was anti-dynastic. He was merely in favour of love between the Serbs and the Croats, and had no thoughts of "Greater Serbia". Because he said he was in accord with the Serbs, thinking they are pro-dynasty, he was accused as traitor. He is prepared to die, as I see it. Kučinić was searched on Jarakula's accusation, but they found nothing. Some other pupils were examined, and Tomjanović, who took part at the secret sessions on Yugoslavia (four were held, as I heard), told everything and pulled in a number of teachers.

Developments of the situation on the home front, engaged in the Red Cross

Enthusiasm for the war is great. Our army bombarded Belgrade and already entered Serbia. Many soldiers are taken prisoner. Russia began mobilizing, and Germany declared war upon her and the navy is already bombarding Libava⁹⁶. The Germans are terribly energetic. Even if this is a just war which wants to steer Serbia's politics in the other direction, others must meddle in. Justice is on our side, God will grant us victory. The Croatian pupils of both confessions – as well as Jews – are enthusiastically against Serbia. They report to the gendarmes and police as volunteers. They march along the streets with other Croats with rifles on their shoulders, while long bayonets jut into the air. On their left arm is a black-yellow sign (Vereshchagin's painting). Those who did not report to the army, joined the Red Cross. There are many ladies here. I was assigned to the Red Cross Post Office. Yesterday the Croatian Home Front soldiers came. The train arrived, and

⁹⁶ Libava, a town in Latvia

pupils and other Croats sang on the platform the Croatian anthem...and shouted: "Long live." The soldiers reported in great numbers. Young ladies showered them with flowers. Coloner Schnitzler greeted them and gave over the town to them, and the Mayor greeted them wishing them to feel here at home. They sang the *Tzarevska*, *Ahoy the Croats*, *Drina River* and there were outrageous shouts against the Serbs. The soldiers were escorted and everyone along the road manifested against the Serbs, against "Serbian propaganda", "the bombers". This was even too much. Stupid women with kilometer-long tongues cried out without a heart. It would have been better to sing only patriotic songs and to shout with a sacred seriousness: "Down with Peter and Great Serbian propagators." The shouts could also be heard like: "Long live Germany and Wilhelm, down with Russians." The demonstrators went to the Mayor and shouted: "Long live the Croatian Mayor." He greeted them all and told them to be tolerant toward the Serbs. Then Kućinić addressed the Mufti and stressed the harmony between Catholics and Muslims who are one nation with two religions. The Mufti expressed his loyalty to the Emperor. They sang the *Tzarevska*⁹⁷ for the twentieth time (earlier it was sung in front of the *Balkan* and *Bosnia*, etc.). I left with a cleric – I don't know his name – and his sister and we went home. Reading in *Hrvatska prosvjeta* the article *Autos sacramentales* I came upon a brilliant idea.

Banja Luka, 6 August 1914 – (17 years and 8 months)

The flames of war envelop Europe

The world is aflame – the devil triumphs. I'm enthusiastic because I am fighting for a sacred cause. We declared war upon Serbia for our own defence – otherwise they would poison us from the inside. The politics of Russian nationalists for whom nationalism is a religion aligned themselves with the politics of the Serbs which would like to destroy the Monarchy and thus weaken the strong Germany. Germany – Emperor Wilhelm⁹⁸ – out of a just interest for his people and Niebelung fidelity allied with Austria. France and England were envious of the development of Germany and could hardly wait for a better opportunity to strike at her. France broke into Alsace without a declaration of war and captured three small towns. Reading the reasons quoted by Poincaré, it is visible that it is all slapped together and written without a heart. They killed Jaures, the socialist leader who wanted a just peace. The German army passed through Belgium, and the English said, that allegedly because of this they declare war. That our cause is a just one can be seen from Wilhelm's speech, which is so simple and full of content and with trust in God. Poincaré never mentions God. The Germans bombed Libava and entered into Russia, we are succeeding against Serbia, but there has been no reliable news as yet. Rumania, Turkey and Japan are on our side. Italy is neutral. The chauvinism of the French – although I love them very much – is seen in an incident when a French doctor with two officers wanted to infect a well in Metz with cholera bacteria. "Culture!" Enemy airplanes were seen in our country. It seems that Russia declared war upon us. They found bombs in Sima Milanović's premises – who would think of that! He was such a fine young boy. Great God, please grant the victory to our just arms. Whatever there is of nullity among us, burn it!

⁹⁷ The Imperial anthem *Gott erhalte, Gott beschütze* (God sustain, God protect) whose melody is identical to the German anthem, was composed in 1797 by Joseph Haydn, based on motifs of the Croatian song *Vjutro rano se ja stanem* (I get up early in the morning).

⁹⁸ Emperor Wilhelm II, 1859–1941, the last German Emperor and King of Prussia.

Banja Luka, Monday, 17 August 1914 – (17 years and 8 months)

Further course of war events in European countries

God knows why I haven't written for so long. When one has the least to do, it is hardest to find the time. We live in the times of great events, but it is correct to say that the time of great events doesn't exist. Time passes and shapes the conditions. With the time, nations rise materially and spiritually, gradually expansive ambitions appear, and it leads to war, gradually even this is over, many evil things are burnt, new ones come about, etc. Every day, every second is the carrier of great events. Wars are merely an explosion and ripening which takes place through the seconds. The European war is on. We are at war with Russia and we are already 70 kilometres into their country. Who would have hoped for that? Everyone thought that the Cossacks would penetrate into our territory. The Serbs had said they would reach Vienna within three days. Only in these last few days our army began entering Serbia. Some units came all the way to Valjevo. Another part of the army is going through Albania. There were bloody battles and many casualties on both sides. The Serbs poison the wells when retreating. Barbarians! But this will only enflame the fury of our army. Strangely, no one expected Austria to be that strong. A just cause and the ethically elevated person of the ruler made Austria united. Rumanians fraternize with the Hungarians, Czechs and with the Germans. If Austria after this war remains as compact as it is now, it will have achieved more than the taking of ten Salonikis. The Germans are advancing strongly and energetically on both sides. Near Muhlhausen and Legarde they beat the French, and took Liége. There was a lot of blood and newspapers reported that the French and the Belgians behaved like animals. They were killing physicians and the wounded. The chauvinists were doing that; still, the French are a great nation. I didn't hope that the German army which is at war on three sides – that it would advance on all three. The navy ships bombarded Libava, one small boat sneaked up all the way to the Thames River and planted sea mines, while in the Mediterranean two German boats bombed Golben and destroyed two big battleships. Our navy is still waiting. The Danube Monitors excelled by bombing Belgrade with airplanes. This is about all. Victory is on the side of justice.

Poland is almost entirely liberated. Pupils from all sides are reporting as volunteers. Our Emperor issued a decree to the Polish people in which he says that he came to liberate her from the hands of Asian barbarians, from the hands of a government which oppressed and banished from their country all free-minded spirits (Dostoevsky, Gogol, Gorky). There was a beautiful declaration by a Ukrainian deputy which speaks about the battle of culture against barbarism. Russians are suppressing their national features, forbid them to celebrate their greatest poet Shevchenko, etc. The English politicians except Grey say they are fighting alongside the evil ones. Professors from Oxford and Cambridge issued a manifesto in which they express the horror of making war on a nation close to the English, whose science and culture is being transplanted onto English soil, etc. Italy yesterday declared war on the French and the English. Germany will have to divide the laurel wreath with her.



Banja Luka – the Vrba River. In the background the Town Bridge. On the right a tower and part of the walls of the Banja Luka fortress Kastel.

Rest, literature, religion which uplifts, colleagues in prison

These last few days I rode in a boat and went swimming. I was in Šargovac on the threshing. I see my little one more often and Miss Vikta too. I read the Holy Scripture, Shakespeare and Turgenev (*Smoke*). Everything for pleasure. I find great enjoyment in this.

Sometimes I appear disgusting to myself: my only solace after such a day are religious thoughts which I entertain when lying down. Religious life. Thoughts of Eternity. Death, Love, this is something great. Only skepticism, charged with terrible irony wishes to destroy what is most elevated in man.

My colleagues were in prison for a long time. In Milanović's place the bombs were not found, as it was first said, but yesterday the people's guard caught him *in flagranti* in an awkward situation with a woman, and paraded them both through the town. He is not the only one in this respect among the "good ones". Inconsistency with an ideal.⁹⁹ – Bürger and Jarakula are still in prison. Jarakula pleads not guilty (!), Bürger is fine, but his parents are crying.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 30 August 1914 – (17 years and 8 months)

Situation on the battlefields, fight for the Truth

I haven't been writing for a long time, although I was feeling an urge to write. What has been piling up for two hundred years now exploded. The fight for Truth. Flame, storm, the roar of cannons, but It will prevail. If the Poles, Ukrainians and other enslaved peoples do not liberate themselves now, they will do so a bit later. It is a battle of unseen proportions. A German and a Frenchman are at each other's throats. Namur has been taken heroically and the Germans are advancing against the French. The Belgians are inhuman. We were successful in Serbia. The Croats have excelled, they took Šabac and Valjevo. The Serbs were also beaten near Višegrad. But, we leave the war with Serbia and go on against the Russians. The Russian left wing penetrated into Austria, while the right wing was halted at Krasnik. It is a big battle, four days have passed, and still it is not over. Tomorrow we will know more.

⁹⁹ French: Incohérence de l'ideal

On the ethics of warfare, on the morality of self-defence

I have a nagging question, is war in any case unethical? Does it imply achieving good purpose with evil means? When somebody attacks me, and wishes to crush me in body and soul, I have the right to defend myself to prevent that crime. The Poles are rising, this is self-defence. In this case the war is holy. After this war, Russia must crystallize itself. What is unnatural in her must fall apart. Only then the real Russia will emerge, a country represented by such great minds. It is bound to be a better government which will not expel the free thinkers.

A review of read works

I myself don't know how I spent the time; I read the newspapers. I also played the piano, but since I was enrolled in the Red Cross, I stopped. I read Turgenev's *Smoke* and it is obviously Turgenev's work, but it cannot, along with all its beauty, be compared to the *Home of the Gentry*. The motif of demonic love is elaborated in too much detail in some parts. But, along with all that, we have a wonderful elaboration of the great world view¹⁰⁰, the matrix and poetry of life. For instance, after many years they see each other, but he cannot remember who she is. They make the acquaintance anew. The technique of a realistic novel has borne success. Demonic love must give way to a simple one. But again, we see this characteristic of Turgenev: females are stronger than males. The key characters: Irina after her love lives in splendor, but without her beloved, while Tatyana after her break up with Litvin remains faithful to him.

Comparison between Miss Franjić and Greta

I meet the little one from time to time. I realize more and more that she is not for me. She has good traits, but lacks the spiritual élan, the breadth of vision that I am looking for. With Greta I could read Schiller, speak about history and everything else, she understood everything and actually knew some things better than me. She was well read and free in the world. There are few girls like that. I think that this relationship, if it is a relationship, will gradually grow cold. I was flying after her, no – I tried to find her, to talk, but when we met, we talked about things devoid of any significance. Today after Mass – I myself don't know why – she told me I have thin legs like Šandor. Strangely stupid. I wasn't hoping to hear from her this talk about the body.

Spiritual struggles and temptations, desire for sacraments of confession and Communion

The temptations attack furiously, but prayer keeps me upright. In the Holy of holies (Rabindranath Tagore) – in my heart, there is an unshakeable faith. Though there is still some skepticism left. It is an eternal struggle. I know I am not perfect, my sins ache, but I don't know what they are. In the moment in which I commit an evil thing I see that it is evil, but later I forget and repeat the same. If only I could have an intelligent confessor here to open myself to him, a man who would understand and warn me. I will do my best to go to confession before leaving and to receive the Body for strength in life that lies ahead.

Pajić wrote. Maybe he will come. My Ante is writing. Says he recovered. From every line of his letter, and everything in general I can see that this is the good old Ante.

Banja Luka, Tuesday, 1 September 1914 – (17 years and 9 months)

Situation on the battlefields of Poland, Ukraine and Russia

A terrible fight is going on. Mankind has seen nothing like that as yet. It is about the existence of the Monarchy. The chains which bound Poland and Ukraine are cracking. Or

¹⁰⁰ German: Weltanschauung

maybe, the time has not come yet. Shall we go a step back in history? Hopefully the Russians will not win and enslave. Then it would take a couple of centuries to get rid of them. Our army is good, and the awareness that we are fighting for a just cause is pushing us ahead. God willing, we shall prevail. This is what it says in the newspapers.

Banja Luka, 11 September 1914 – (17 years and 9 months)

War developments in Russia, leaving for the Military Academy

Tomorrow I leave for the Academy. I read *Smoke*. Brilliant. I wrote something about him. Russians in Lvov. Belgrade destroyed. I spoke with the wounded. War is a terrible thing. One should kill all the Russian potentates. Russian people are good and against the war, but their rulers want a butchery because they are not going to war themselves.



*Gospodska Street in Banja Luka along which Merz often strolled with colleagues
(See Diary entry of 7 March 1914).*

ON THE MILITARY ACADEMY in Wiener Neustadt 1914

After graduating from the Technical high school, following the desire of his parents, Ivan enrolled at the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. His life in the Academy was marked by dissatisfaction and intense internal struggles, which found their way into his Diary. An especially great suffering was caused by the immense gap between the spiritual and cultural values which were his “second nature” and the rough military environment which surrounded him. In the Military Academy Ivan was exposed to a great inner trial. It was easy for him to study, exercise and keep order. However, he bore with great difficulty the roughness and lack of morals which he confronted there and which daily insulted his faith and honesty. He couldn't reconcile himself with the thought that he would have to pass his entire life in a job for which he had no zest. He confided his pain and doubts first of all to the Diary, followed by his former teacher Dr. Maraković and finally, his parents. As he had no desire for the military profession, with the consent of his parents, after three months, just before Christmas 1914 he quit his studies at the Academy.

DIARY

21 September 1914 – 23 December 1914

Wiener Neustadt, 21 September 1914 – (17 years and 9 months)

Initial impressions of the stay at the Academy

I have already made the leap in the life. Having entered the Military Academy means I must become a good soldier. But it is all different with me. I never had the will for the military service, but to make life easier for my parents, I came over here. Having done this I chose two duties which I will pursue unconditionally: my further literary and artistic education and the discharge of military duties. I don't mind being a soldier, but there are no real soldiers here. Their ideal is not some unreachable thing, but life for the Emperor. If the Emperor would do wrong, they would be his instruments, they don't have God as their ideal. Actually, they despise religion and this is a natural choice for them because they don't know religion. They are mainly pupils of the technical high schools¹⁰¹ who have had no moral upbringing. True, there are some among them who say it is not nice to go to coffee rooms, that an officer must have a side profession, but they don't know why it is so, they don't think of transience, of the Creator of these beautiful laws of nature.

¹⁰¹ German: Oberrealschüler



Ivan Merz – student at the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt

Lack of spiritual life, his faith wanes

I have been writing a lot and some cards are filled with hatred toward this. I now see the terrible side of this, but I am not going to put my teeth into all of it. My faith looks feeble, and the thoughts about the beautiful and religious life in general seem to be dying away. This is because I have no one with whom I could share the higher things. Confession which I would like so much, as well as the Communion, I cannot receive. The priest here is shallow, too. In the church, he says that for a soldier there are three things that matter: virtue, diligence and religion. As if the soldier was a different species of man. Religion contains all the virtues. One of my colleagues here committed suicide. It's a wonder only one of them did so. Their ideal is to be a soldier, but why, how, nobody spares a thought on that. And when this ideal is gone, not knowing the purpose of life, he doesn't wish to live any longer. Life is not pleasure, but sacrifice.

Wiener Neustadt, 14 October 1914 – (17 years and 10 months)*Disappointment over moral corruption*

I haven't been writing for a long time. Already 14 days have passed and I got the first notions of life here. I had never hoped to have to meet such people. At first I was shocked at everything; actually, I even cried.

Wiener Neustadt, 15 October 1914 – (17 years and 10 months)

Confronting lack of culture

Yes, just yesterday as I was writing, they intruded upon me with terrible irony and attacks, rather skillfully crafted, so that at times I couldn't extricate myself. Today I wonder at that, because the attacks were very shallow. Actually, when I spoke, believing that they know the fundamentals of cultural history, that our ideals should be *égalité*,

fratérnit , libert ,¹⁰² they jumped at me saying the fruit of that is revolution. They do not accept any side in the revolution. As a matter of fact, I couldn't prove anything to them. Even the most stupid of them look at me with pity when I say that war is a beastly thing and that I am against the war. When I mentioned Berta Suttner¹⁰³, none of them has heard of her. A high military school and they know so little! But even if they are in favor of the war and against Faith, one would again say that it is a dispute about cultural issues and that they, just as myself, strive towards the good. But, "the tree will be known by its fruits".

Corruption among the Academy students

In the most solemn moments, the baseness of men shows itself best. We had the medical.¹⁰⁴ Officers swore that they will sacrifice everything for God, the Emperor and the homeland, and all the colleagues got drunk like animals. They cursed God in Croatian, spoke obscenities, vomited and spat on the floors. Several of them sat on the floor and drank champagne from the bottle. Yes, these were the same ones who mocked me yesterday for studying Latin, for striving towards the immaterial. I cannot even describe what it is here like. If I had been able to keep my diary regularly, it would have been obvious how I suffered at the beginning and cried for all this immorality. The greatest evil is negligence. In order for them to dig themselves out of these vices, I would force them to work incessantly. Work is necessary.

He nevertheless manages to read some literature

Alma Mater Teresiana, said Belmont in a speech. Here there is only evil. It is the heart of corruption and decline of Austria. I don't think that people will get better. In order to preserve those grains of nobility that still exist, one ought to create strong clerical organizations. Nothing can be achieved without them. During this period that I have been here, I did quite a lot. Tired after the exercises, I completed a part of the analysis of *Smoke*, read Turgenev's *King Lear of the Steppes*, something from Brunetier's *Balsac* and something from *Langenscheidt*. I wrote to Ljuba and he sent me excerpts from Turgenev that were translated at the graduation exam, as well as *The Art of Prayer*. I keep an orderly correspondence with other colleagues. My dear Ante has been accepted into the army. When I only think what a good and noble man he is, compared to my present colleagues. Plach, K hler and Kratena were at the border in Schulzenpan. K nig is coming here on Sunday...

Visit to the grave of Zrinski and Frankopan

After this disgusting environment, it was a pleasant and warm experience visiting the grave of Zrinski and Frankopan together with Kova i . We passed through an alley of lime-trees, and perpendicular to it were alleys of cypresses with graves between them. The inscriptions on the gravestones read "*Here lies the family... Peace be unto them....*" I asked the grave-digger for Zrinski and Frankopan, and he started to ramble in a dialect about some Artillery Major. "For Heaven's sake man, they are Croatian heroes, where do they lie?"

"What, what?" "Frankopan", I responded. "Oh yes, Frantischpan", and he took us there. The grave is at the end of the alley, almost at the wall and an airplane was flying overhead. The grave has a memorial plate with inscription in Latin: "Ossa of Zrinski, the governor of Croatia, and Frankopan"¹⁰⁵. The entire text is in Latin, and on the grave a

¹⁰² French: equality, brotherhood, freedom

¹⁰³ Bertha von SUTTNER (1843 -1914), Austrian writer. She advocated peace in the world and got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.

¹⁰⁴ German: Ausmusterung – military medical check-up, a precondition for acceptance into the Army

¹⁰⁵ Ossa (Latin) – bones of Zrinski, the Governor of Croatia and the Count of Frankopan

withered wreath on which the traces of the Croatian flag could still be seen. Remembrance that good people were here and showed respect to their heroes, respect that can be given to the bones. These bones lie below the lime-trees and cypresses under the red evening sky mixed with the blackness of smoke. Glory to you, honest Croats, even a heart of stone will wail when it sees how honest people perish! No, they didn't perish, they still live in the memory of honest Croats: from their blood flowers and roses have blossomed and will continue to blossom. We stood at some distance from the grave: Kovačić saluted and suggested we pray one "Our Father" for these heroes. As we were leaving the cemetery, it was already getting dark, and Kovačić suggested we enter an old church. A reddish evening light was blinking: in the faint light, we could only make out the parallel shadows, the tops of the pews. Behind the church, we met one Croat, and Kovačić, who a little while ago suggested we pray "Our Father", took pleasure in the scandalous anecdotes that this Croat was saying.

It is my mom's birthday. My good mom and my good dad. They love me, and I also love them and I sincerely gave them an account of my position; they make no mention of pulling me out from here. I will flee myself. With God – enough for today.

Wiener Neustadt, 24 October 1914 – (17 years and 10 months)¹⁰⁶

In prison

Here I am in prison. Some captain scolded me for having said that I am allowed here to learn languages and he confiscated my *Smoke*, *Lohengrin* and *Brunetière* which I took with me to read here. Still, I managed to smuggle in my trousers *The Art of Prayer*¹⁰⁷ and some chocolate. This is not a two days' work. To pray and unite with God, this is the work of a lifetime. I had company in prison. Shortly after me a soldier from the 16th Regiment entered, and we felt an immediate closeness. He told me that he had been in prison several times on account of this captain (...)

The benefits of prison

I feel wonderful in this prison, only I am a little bit sad when I think that König is now riding in the train and will soon be in Wiener Neustadt, the city of blood, and I will not be at the station to greet him. He sent me a telegram – on my instructions, of course: "I am coming on Saturday evening due to some urgent family problems." And these gentlemen here don't have so much of a heart to let me go and get some fresh news from home. The books that König is carrying for me he will have to carry back, and mom and dad who can hardly wait to hear about me from a witness, shall remain betrayed. All the same, I will suffer a little, and in spite of pressure from my superiors, I will remain cheerful in my heart.

¹⁰⁶This is the beginning of 1A notebook of the Diary of the bl. I. Merz which covers a brief period from 24th to 26th October 1914. At that time Merz was in prison at the Military Academy and he wrote his diary notes in a special small notebook which was later named A1, but its contents are part of the first notebook of his Diary which he continued to write after getting out from prison.

¹⁰⁷M. J. SCHEEBEN, German original: *Die Kunst zu beten*. This book was recommended to him by his former teacher Dr. Lj. Maraković and Merz acquired it and studied it to his great spiritual benefit during his stay at the Military Academy.



Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt in which Merz spent three months.

A critical analysis of his behavior

I am only sad and it lies heavily on my heart when I commit something evil. Somebody drives me mad and in a fit of anger I throw a chair at him, I myself don't know how, and call him a swine. Help me God, not to do this anymore! I once lied having said to captain Slusarez that I didn't know we were supposed to go to a battalion inspection, whereas in reality it was boring for me; this won't and must never happen again! There were many other things and I feel I ought to go to confession to clean myself of the burden of sins; a desire, a burning desire pulls me toward the One who is so good and just, so dear, and to receive him in Communion. But where, and how; when I reach the university – help me God to make it to there – I will be able to go to confession with our pupils. This will be my company, good and noble, guided by a single thought, not wallowing like animals in the mire, ignoring all that is great – the nation, state and mankind. And I am sitting here because of these people, but still I feel gladness in my heart because I am distanced from them and I know that I am suffering for a noble cause.

Army, patriotism, immorality

But yes, I am in the army. What is an army? It should be the guardian of patriotism! And who is the guardian of patriotism?! Surely, not someone who cannot overcome his passions! My dear and male Austria: if such people continue to be the guardians of patriotism, we are following in the footsteps of the Romans. France is already a long way in following the Romans. What a pity, such a nation and because of such disgusting individuals it is bound to perish. Germans are following in their steps too. They are winning in this war, they reached a culmination. The power of the people is still strong, but the deeds? Help us God, may everything turn out good!

The moral situation in his beloved Croatia and her mission

And what is my beloved Croatia doing? I watch and watch with regret. World history doesn't teach us to look pessimistically, although in world history I can see only one religious combat motive: the fight for justice and truth. The fight for and against God, the battle of good and evil elements, as the mythologies say. The peoples of Croatia, as well as Bosnia are still not corrupt. We hope for the best for them. Good and honest people. Beautiful folklore. Folk songs – No. 1 in the world. But the cities of Croatia and Bosnia are terribly corrupt. Many evils come from Europe. Croatian art itself is infested with the erotic, the sick, modern currents; even Meštrović¹⁰⁸. True, there is a lot of good coming in: Turgenev, Nelson, Lermontov, Manet, Courbet, Corot. Many useful things for the exploitation of land come from Germany. The corruption will descend from the cities into the villages and good-bye Croatia! No, if we knit a flaming cross into the red-white-blue flag, which will destroy all evil, and shed light upon the good, then Croatia will fulfil its role in world history. God help us!

¹⁰⁸ Ivan MEŠTROVIĆ (1883–1962), world famous Croatian sculptor

We are at war with Russians. Oh you, great nation, when the Empire collapses with a huge thunder, the days of light will come upon you. You make war and drown in blood for the sake of your tyrants.

Wiener Neustadt, Sunday, 25 October 1914 – (17 years and 10 months)

An overview of prison life

I have been in prison for 24 hours. I laugh at myself. This prison is intended to straighten me up, but I am better off here than outside of it. I never got as much food since coming into the Academy. The soldiers brought so much for me, I couldn't eat all of it; the Croatian soldier who is fond of me brought me a bread roll at four P.M., and after that another. These Croats are really good; they like to please everyone. With him I discussed about the Parliament, the deputies, the Hungarians. His thinking is the same as with all the Croats, he tells me that there are quite a number of Croats here at the Academy; of course, he knows them all, because they were all in prison!

I slept on the bench relatively well. For one hour, I took a walk under the captain's supervision. In private, he apologized and said he didn't intend to disgrace languages and literature, but that they served a soldier only for amusement. Therefore, he sent me a heap of military books. I put them all in the closet. Until I receive a positive response from my parents, I won't bother with them. I had a good sleep in the afternoon. I left my lasting mark on the door with my poems, I composed them, scribbled, and talked with the imprisoned *Oberrealschüler* (*technical high school pupil*). Most of the time I read *The Art of Prayer*. I am reading this book for the second time now. Initially, it didn't seem like much, but the more I studied it, I realized the subtleness of the logic and the writer's religious feeling.

A soldier just came in and interrupted my writing. I asked him if he could write. He went to school for four years and now he took a pencil and wrote something in a telegraphic form. A perfect telegraphist. As a matter of fact, his sister sends him whole pages by telegraph. How crafty, these Croats! An ordinary peasant, but with such clear thinking. In this Croat, as Đalski says in *The Old Cop* I see the fate of Croatia. He told me: "If I had stayed with the regiment, I would be a corporal, but I don't want to give orders, I prefer to obey."

Again, he entered and brought a bread roll with ham and when I persuaded him that I was full, he said: "And I thought you were hungry." What good people; they would give everything to those who lack. The 20th century should look upon these people as its model. *Revenons à la nature*.¹⁰⁹ It is from the peasants that we expect the renaissance of society. They just sang a serenade¹¹⁰ for a second course Academy student who is in prison.

How miserable this body is. I haven't moved from these four walls and I experienced so much. My spirit travelled on the wings of freedom to touch the Immeasurable.

Let me get back to the booklet *The Art of Prayer*. But what can I do, the Croat came again telling me how he travelled from Trieste to Germany, how he worked 14 days for a black Englishman on a boat and got 5 crowns plus food for each day. Then, he went by foot without any food for 3 days to reach Tyrol. Rocks all around, and he feared the wolves and the bears. With the black guy, he communicated half in Czech, half in Italian.

Thoughts about transience

Now we will reflect a little, though I am not as fresh as I was a little while ago. I was doing physical exercises and am tired. Transience is something terrible. Yesterday at this

¹⁰⁹ French: Let's get back to nature.

¹¹⁰ German: Ständchen

time I got here, and now everything is entirely different. I remember when I was riding in the train going to Opatija, I felt that these bright moments will pass and I will only be able to remember them. The same will be tomorrow at this time outside when I will think of this moment which seemed odd to me at first. The greatest suffering is presented in our memory as something light. Everything passes and “the sky and the stars shall pass, but My words shall not pass”. This is something which I now feel with all my soul. Any moment in the future can bring me a nasty thought: the battle of body and soul. Our entire life is such a battle between these two elements and it is by this battle that we strive towards the Ideal of our life – the Almighty.

God, Holy Spirit, give me strength to pray, to speak with my Creator, with the Creator of the wonderful laws of nature, with the lord of immeasurable twinkling stars, with eternal Truth!

Striving for God, union with God in prayer

Prayer is religion.¹¹¹ I believe in God our Lord the Almighty; I believe that He is a perfect spirit in freedom of will and in greatness. I am a tiny human being. I possess the freedom of will, albeit a limited one. My Spirit is limited. But the little Promethean spark, the particle of the particle of the Almighty pulls me toward This One and confirms his existence.

Just like a man whose feet are not completely drowned in mud wishes to converse with someone wiser than him, the spirit with all its might strives towards the perfect, towards the great Spirit. He speaks with Him in prayer and He responds in such a mysterious, refined way which makes one think one is breathing the air from on high, as Banon says. This conversation with the Almighty, this connection, acknowledging the Almighty is religion. Religion without prayer is dead.

Prayer is not being measured by length and it doesn't need to be read from books; speaking from one's heart, contemplating the Scripture and intents of the Almighty – this is prayer. God is a spiritual Being, and as we are bodily creatures, the thought of Him is both bodily and spiritual. In order for us to understand him, he became Emmanuel, similar to us, and we can pray to Jesus, and prayer to him is much easier because Jesus is closer to us.

Wiener Neustadt, Monday, 26 October 1914 – (17 years and 10 months)

Prison is coming to an end

It is four in the afternoon. The stupidity – prison – will be over in three days and I will emerge from it “corrected”. I slept like a log, only this morning I was hungry; no wonder, yesterday and today we had beans for lunch and I didn't eat. So, yesterday and today I left half of my lunch. I have finished *The Art of Prayer*. A beautiful book. Full of inspiring thoughts. The second time, if I ever end up here again, I will take with me some stories, chocolate, bread, sugar, etc. and with such a supply I will be able to enjoy it more. My feet are a bit cold, but in the future I will know how to help myself. Today a soldier gave me his soap and towel, winter kilims. He used to be a night bird, as he says of himself. (...) ¹¹²

¹¹¹ German: Das Gebet ist Religion

¹¹² This is the end of the notebook 1A of the Bl. I. Merz's Diary which covers a brief period from the 24th until 26th December 1914, i.e. the period while Merz was three days in prison.

Wiener Neustadt, 7 December 1914¹¹³

Critical of himself and his weaknesses

In my thoughts, I analyzed others a lot, and for a long time I lived arrogantly, thinking I am the only good one here, whereas I behaved rather egoistically towards them. If I received a parcel from home, I would hide it in order not to be asked to share something. I cannot logically develop everything, because there is noise all around me.

Visit to Vienna and the Academic Society "Croatia"

Yesterday I was in Vienna. I went there the day before yesterday with the intent to see *Demetrius* in the theatre. Due to my laziness and ineptness I didn't manage to see it. I should have made the entire plan of how to use my time in Vienna in advance. I will do so in the future. However, I cannot say that my stay in Vienna remained fruitless. I met with the members of "Croatia"¹¹⁴ and I grasped the tie which binds all of them together. It is such a pleasure to come from a society in which the only identification is with the erotic, in which the purpose of life is erotic, into another one, among men and women who work for only one thought only and who live honestly and nobly. Yes, I don't even have to mention the greatness and beauty of Christian life!



Ivan (first to the left) with colleagues Plach and König in Vienna on 6 December 1914.

I stayed overnight at Plach's place and we went to visit König. Then we went to have our picture taken. Yes, it will be a nice memory.¹¹⁵ We should immortalize our first meeting in the students' dorm. May God grant us good fruit. Then we went to the Maria Hilfe church where I wanted to buy artistic postcards. Regrettably, the shop was closed. Then we went to the Croatian church. I couldn't collect my thoughts properly. Szetlik and Lastavica were here. After that we went to the canteen. Plach was invited for lunch. Pelz also came with us to the canteen. With him and another guy we went into the Slovenian library. Pelz is a librarian with Rešetar.¹¹⁶ (...) We then went to "Croatia".¹¹⁷ König and

¹¹³ This is the beginning of the 2nd notebook of the Bl. I. Merz's Diary which covers the period from 7th December 1914 until 16th March 1915.

¹¹⁴ *Croatia* – The Academic Society of Croats in Vienna

¹¹⁵ This photograph has been preserved and is kept in the Museum of Ivan Merz

¹¹⁶ Prof. Milan REŠETAR (Dubrovnik, 1860 – Florence, 1942), Slavist, historian of art, collector.

¹¹⁷ The Society of Croatian Catholic students, founded in Vienna by the priest Ivan Butković on 12 May 1903 lay the foundation of the Croatian Catholic Movement founded by the bishop Antun Mahnić.

Plach came. A beautiful Franciscan Slavist and chaplain Fleger came, along with Krael, Crni and others. Some girls, students, were also there; one lady doctor was “Santa Claus” who came and distributed presents. Everything was so beautiful; naturally, political jokes were on the menu, too. They played tamburitza (König) and we all sang. One beautiful miss, with chestnut brown hair, in a green and blue shirt, of fair complexion, sat facing me. She was truly beautiful. A spiritual beauty, a virgin’s pride and gentleness emanated from her every glance.

God, how come I am here¹¹⁸ among people without a heart, for whom girls are only beasts?!

Wiener Neustadt, 8 December 1914 – (18 years)

Critical review of the sermon and behavior of the soldiers at mass

Today is the Immaculate Conception. I was in the church in the morning. Again, the sermon was for the Catholics, and not for non-believers. Naturally, they mock the priest when he speaks about the Holy Spirit who begot... To him who doesn’t believe this seems an absurdity. He spoke about the war without any depth, instead of pointing out that wars are a consequence of the fight for truth, that the destinies of nations are not decided on the battlefields, but on the fields of the spiritual, moral life of a nation. On the basis of history and everything that is beautiful even today he ought to show them in an indirect way that they are wallowing in the mire, that they are disgusting and arrogant, that they don’t know what love and gentleness is.

Rudeness toward the priest is massive. When he reads from the Gospel they cough and make noise, forcing him to stop reading until they quiet down. If they don’t, he admonishes them by saying that in every decent society while one speaks the others keep silence. On another occasion, he came to a student asking him why he always laughs in the church. The student denied it, etc...

After the mass, I went to town to an optician and ordered glasses. My eyes are terribly weak. Astigmatism of the right eye is so great that even with my present glasses the images do not fall upon each other.

Learning Latin and comparisons with Roman history

My mom and my grandpa wrote to me. Yes, I can hardly wait to go home. Ante has had enough of life. Life is a sacrifice. Šandor is having a difficult time. Today I studied Latin for about four hours.¹¹⁹ I just translated and memorized the entire text of the fourth file. It is an excerpt from Roman history from the Consulate until the time when one of the Consuls was elected from the plebeian class. Yes, the Roman State was something great. The democratic consciousness four hundred years ago was just as strong as the constitutional consciousness of the French during the Revolution. The Romans (French) banished their king (Tarquin – Louis XVI) and the people wanted to rule. The exiled Tarquin (Louis XVI) appealed to a Monarch: Parsena (Friedrich Wilhelm), asking him to restore his royal prerogatives, as there was a danger that the republican movement might spill over into other countries.

An overview of daily events and concern about the continuing stay in the Academy

Yes, I read the *Gral*¹²⁰. This issue is beautiful and I will read it all once again, as there are so many new and beautiful thoughts inside which I must process.

¹¹⁸ In the Military Academy

¹¹⁹ In the Banja Luka high school, which was a technical school, Merz didn't learn Latin. As he planned to enroll at the Vienna University, he had to learn it by himself, and he passed the Latin exam in Sarajevo in 1915. In his Diary from 1914 and 1915 he often refers to learning Latin.

¹²⁰ *Gral* – a German literary Catholic periodical

I noticed that one sins less when there is more to do. I would like to compose anthems to work, bodily and mechanical work, because one doesn't think of evil; but one doesn't think of eternity either. All our work must be a Faustian perfecting, the striving for comprehension. The little bit that we do mechanically must be a means towards the work which perfects us.

My remaining here is an impossible mission. I want to be free, I want to get at the depth of things, not to learn what the lecturers know only superficially. While learning the technical sciences, I must admire the greatness of the Creator who crafted such marvelous, precise laws, and not merely study something that we are going to use to kill millions of dear and unspoiled people who will regenerate the world. Responsible for this whole war are tyrants who subjugate the peoples, who subjugate faith and one would become a nihilist if one didn't know that so many millions among the intelligentsia are equally tyrants, egoists to whom "I" is everything, and others are nothing. For this reason, peaceful work, education of one's self, is the motto of a man.

Today we had a free day. Many went to a public house...¹²¹

Let me say a word or two about Kovačić. Černy told him today that he is not worthy of his homeland. He took this joke seriously, and his anger turned to crying. To be told that he is not worthy of his country which is the holiest thing for him in the world?! He is theatrical. Otherwise, of a good heart and instinct, but it doesn't prevent him from using disgusting expressions.

Wiener Neustadt, 9 December 1914 – (18 years)

Contents from literature

This morning I was the first on the firing range. I am a bad marksman. I learnt some Latin and read Livius. I just came to Coriolanus. He was truly a hero, but weaker than the one in Shakespeare. I think Shakespeare drew his inspiration from Livius. (...)

(Here follows a short account of Coriolanus' biography and his destiny)

I sense here¹²² that something smells of homosexuality. There is some strange talk about it. I know of it only superficially.

When will the time come for perfecting myself?!

Wiener Neustadt, 10 December 1914 – (18 years)

Critical account of his colleagues and professors at the Academy

Yesterday we had one hour, and today only two hours of lectures. We study a lot. We have only four days of holidays. God granting, for me it will be forever. I have been studying Latin a lot, but due to difficult matter I progressed only a little. I am learning to turn adverbs into adjectives and gerundive. Latin is a miraculously precise language. For one Latin form, other languages must use two-three forms. Kobler, Pajić, Victoria, as well as my mom wrote to me.

Yes, it was precisely Baumm – an animal unworthy of living – who found himself insulted for being called to account by a major.

They were just commenting how Dr. Malan snatched a lover from an Academy student. Yes, this man knows a lot about medicine. "He calls it Reason, but only uses it to

¹²¹ Some students at the Academy, when they had a free day, frequented a public house. Merz knew this and criticized such immoral behavior of future Austro-Hungarian officers.

¹²² At the Academy

be more a beast than any beast as yet".¹²³ Yes, this knowledge serves him to devise various means for immoral acts. (...)

The only man whom I got to know here who is worthy of living is surely Klein. He is of short build, this dark Italian, but he keeps himself upright. He reads history books the whole day and is especially interested in Egyptian history. I could attest that he knows a lot. But, there is a lot of Italian in him (...). Otherwise, he lacks the moral heights – his spiritual education is bad. Having read some books, he thinks of Jesus as a man belonging to some sect, and still he marvels at the old prophecies. But he doesn't delve deeper. He didn't notice the brilliant course of history – the magnificent struggle for Truth. He commends historical facts, the polity (Cato was the greatest Roman for him) and he is interested in that. No one has turned his attention to the elevated, the only existing one. He plans to go to the university. Maybe someday his eyes will be opened.

Yes, yes, Baumm is really despicable. Healthy in body, full of life energy – no, animal energy – the whole day he speaks, thinks and does the same.

Wiener Neustadt, 11 December 1914 – (18 years)

Remembrance of Greta and the first love, critical towards her parents

My mind is agitated with emotions. Remembrance of Greta, chasing each other in the park, the first dance, the first date. Our jokes and all the rest. Hiking in the hills and reading Schiller. Dinner at their house, the scene by the piano, the first kiss, golden-brown hair...

What was nasty is over. Only the memories live on, she was 16, and so was I. Yes, on December 18th she would have been 18. I also contributed to her death. I was an animal. This will be a deeper cause why she poisoned herself.¹²⁴ It was due to bad upbringing and because they were only looking for the animal in her, whereas she had many beautiful features and a lot of intelligence. She surprised me with her knowledge of history and literature. Once when she came to Banja Luka, we met in front of Božić's house. Pajić was there too. She had just told me that she read *Frühlingsfluten*. I think this was our last conversation. Death – a terrible death – took her away.

Please, great God, Almighty, let this sinner who suffered enough in this world, who was a victim of corruption in society, see at least a glimpse of Your beauty! Leave her not without hope.

Yes, I will write to her parents and her good, evil mother, a woman, who has *esprit*¹²⁵ as one gentleman said about her, but without a moral foundation. She was beautiful once, and still is, does not worry too much over anything, and, though seriously ill, manages to be always cheerful. Yes, she is mostly to blame for this death, and seeing her terrible evil traits, I am still drawn to her: I would like to bow to her, kiss her hand. She is Greta's mother. She knew her daughter best. And the father, a German giant, but weak. The wife does with him as she pleases. He is suffering more and more and is looking for solace – thus I have heard – in wine.

In 1913 when, during an excursion I passed through Travnik, I wanted to throw my cap into their garden. Yes, Greta was there no more. I slept in the wagon. At once,

¹²³ In the original, this text is in German: Er nennt's Vernunft und braucht's allein. Nur tierischer als jedes Tier zu sein. – These are the words of Mephistopheles from Goethe's *Faust*, the Prologue in Heaven, where Mephisto criticizes God saying how his creation – man, corrupted his mind and became the greatest animal among the creatures. It is obvious that Merz applies this text to the current situation in which he found himself in relation to Dr. Malan's immorality.

¹²⁴ Merz, with his sensitive conscience, believed that he had “contributed” to her death, which is not true. Greta, a Protestant of lax moral principles, poisoned herself after allowing to be seduced by a Muslim. When he left her, and there was also talk that she remained pregnant, in despair she committed suicide.

¹²⁵ *esprit* (French) - spirit

someone said: the Teschners are outside. Still sleeping, I rushed out and saw Greta's parents for the first time after her death. Her mother picked flowers for her grave. Good night, little Greta!

A decree was read to us that one is no longer allowed to go to Bosnia. I must come home for Christmas come what may. I met some Croats from the Technical high school. Yes, met, but not have had a chance to study them deeper; they also entertain a liberal outlook on life, that's a fact.

Wiener Neustadt, 13 December 1914 – (18 years)

Complaining of his weak eyes

Yesterday I saw a physician due to so-called nervousness. Namely, I wanted to get a leave. Dr. Mahan whom I mentioned the other day, wasn't interested at all, he only said – to frighten me – that he will submit me to a rectal intervention. Thank you. He took a pill of bromide and I – a healthy man – had to take medicine. Due to that I was drowsy yesterday, and my eyes were weak too, so I didn't do anything. Today I bought the glasses prescribed by Dr. Fröhlich. I threw 10 crowns into the air. I don't see a thing with these glasses. My eyes are very, very weak. If I only had some kind of prism so my image from the right eye would overlap with the left one.

It is already dark. My dear and kind parents again sent me food. Mom added some money as well. It will be hard for them to hear that maybe I won't be coming home for Christmas. Captain Vojnović and lieutenant Stipić were killed. A pity for the former one. He was an intelligent and honest officer. A rarity.

Criticism of the immoral environment in which he is forced to live

I remember my first days here. It was very hard for me. Sitting at the table with those from the second course I was forced to listen to things I never even thought about. As they were throwing bread around, they talked all the time about the price of this woman and the other, about terrible obscenities. I left the table with a terrible anger and cried for being forced to live in such company. It was under this feeling that I wrote letters of despair home and to my friends. Yes, I have gotten used to all this. I am much less offended when I hear them cursing God, when they talk obscenities; although it upsets me terribly, I keep a cool reason, and I figure out the root of this whole evil: upbringing.

Critical analysis of himself and his bodily weakness

To be fair, I criticize others a lot, though I must admit that nature was not too kind towards me. I am terribly clumsy and mentally feeble. They order us to do something, I listen but I don't hear. When another is shown something, he immediately sees and does it, whereas I cannot grasp it. I am unable to do the simplest physical exercises. And with all of that, my eyes are weak. Everybody asks me why I am sleeping. In fact, I cannot look at one object: I cannot focus both of my eyes on it. If I only had good glasses, maybe I would understand everything better. (...)

Philosophical reflections about morale, truth, goodness and beauty, and a comparison between Mary, Diana and Venus

I heard a characteristic song. He seduced her and sang: "You remain a whore, only I remain a man."¹²⁶ Therefore, a man has the privilege to be lecherous, and a woman hasn't. A woman is therefore an animal?! Regretfully, this is how it is in the world.

However, in the worst of people there still exists a lot of good. From these tiny specks of goodness in people we can always reach the conclusion about the quintessence

¹²⁶ German: Du bleibst eine Hure, nur Ich bleib ein Mann.

of one Truth. Venus is the ideal of earthly beauty. She is a beauty created by nature (from the froth). Mary possesses this ideal of natural beauty. But, Venus is a moral outcast. The ancient Greek spirit, the striving present within it, wanted something morally pure. This is Diana. Diana is the ideal of a moral woman. Mary has these features. Mary has reason. Of Pallas Athena. It transpires from this that in people there is that spark which is the evidence of the one Truth. Greek mythology is a chaos of contrasts; therefore, it cannot be a religion. But maybe they felt everything which is right, i.e. the Truth within themselves, but weren't capable of perceiving its uniqueness, its indivisibility. Everything that was good, which tallies with unique Christian names, has remained. But in Christianity, this is something indivisible. Beauty, Truth, Goodness cannot be separated one from another, but we glorify all of this that we find among the pagans. We abhor the immorality of Venus, but enjoy the nature of her beauty. Zeus is not great for throwing his father down from the throne. Yet, we see in him the wise ruler of the universe. If the cult of Zeus had not risen to such heights, he couldn't be revered by the people. Who will venerate the murderer of his father? But who will not adore a gentle and a wise ruler?

Wiener Neustadt, 14 December 1914 – (18 years)

Soldiers' teasing and his reactions, self-criticism

Yes, yes, my hands are stained with blood. Thought, speech and action are all different in me. Yesterday I explicated my world views to the likes of Černý, Sondraček, and today, woe, it all collapsed into dust. This is how it was.

In the afternoon, I slept in my bed. They threw me down and scattered everything from my bed around the room. I laughed. It was a joke. I lay down again, when Černý started flying around my bed trying to throw me out. I asked him to stop. He didn't. I promised him a slap on the face, jumped out and slapped him, merely as a joke. Of course, he returned to me two. He wasn't mad at me, nor was I at him, but I was upset for having behaved like that. I lay down again. One of them slapped me, then another, then the third and so on, all in jest. I got about 10 slaps. More as a joke, I pulled the knife from my bed. When Palik slapped me, I jumped from the bed and, just as he hid behind the stove, I threw the knife after him. I only wanted to scare him.

But this act stained me. They didn't get the joke. They think I was about to injure him and God knows what. They were right. At once Vodraček came and asked me if I intended to be an honest officer. Namely, just yesterday I was telling him about moral principles. God, God, I committed something evil. Let them mock me, let them do whatever they like, I myself am to blame. God, let me change myself; let my acts be as my words are. I will continue talking about yesterday's incident until I am able to clear my name.

My good Mother, the greatest of all, please fill my soul with beautiful feelings, noble thoughts, always mark the right way for me, however hard it may be to follow it!

Wiener Neustadt, 15 December 1914 – (18 years)

Immoral behavior of colleagues at the Academy

Latin is still swirling in my head. I think I learned the entire passive voice. (...) ¹²⁷

Yesterday's incident was nothing. They are so weak they had forgotten it already. At the first moment, they were scandalized and looked at me as somebody evil, then started teasing again. Yes, Černý and Palik were drunk like animals yesterday. Others were in the public house and were telling horrible things about the female animals there. I made notes

¹²⁷ Here Merz quotes a German saying about a mill stone which is in his head, illustrating his state after strenuous learning.

about some of the conversations. This morning we had exercise. Mom got frightened when I said I wouldn't be allowed to go to Bosnia. *Good luck.*¹²⁸ Tomorrow is my birthday. I am done for today. We will continue tomorrow.

Wiener Neustadt, birthday, 16 December 1914 – (18 years)

More about immorality at the Academy, celebration of his 18th birthday

Yesterday one of them (Palik) wanted to stick a con...¹²⁹ on my nose. Today they brought me a picture of a naked student which was in the possession of some waitress. I tore it up. They called me a priest. Today four students (Rosa de Paoli, Battai, etc) held orgies with the whores. One of them spent six months in the hospital due to severe venereal disease. The other one is "in love" with another (this is what he says). These female animals are only making money being with them. I am merely listing the facts. I do not draw the consequences. Europe is a whore. The temple of Europe is small, but magnificent.

This morning we also had exercise, and in the afternoon a dance. I love to dance. The rhythm is so beautiful. I studied Latin quite a lot. Birthday greeting card from home hasn't arrived yet. Only Ante wrote, wishing me happy birthday in advance. By chance, it arrived precisely on my birthday. König will probably come tomorrow.

Wiener Neustadt, 19 December 1914 – (18 years)

Remembering Greta's birthday, struggling for chastity and trying to keep the image of our Lady in his mind's eye

Yes, yesterday was her birthday. She would have been 18. A girl in the brilliance of her beauty. Peace be unto her ashes!

König was here the day before yesterday. He studied Latin. We will not get a leave any time soon. God willing, the animal life will soon come to an end.

Yes, when I hear obscene talk, and when ugly images want to creep into my soul, I always keep the image of our Lady with the child in front of my mind's eye – that beautiful, majestic and mild expression and the quintessence of all that is noble.

Wiener Neustadt, 22 December 1914 – (18 years)

The final critical overview of the stay at the Academy, made only one friendship there

I conclude my diary in the Academy. I listened to what the children were doing and still do in the lower technical school. They do horrible things. The parents commit a crime if they send children to such schools where the teacher only lectures, and when he leaves the class forgets that he is a teacher. This is truly terrible.

Pepino got to liking me a lot. He suffered much and was in pains until he crystallized himself from the mire which surrounds him. Though, he still lacks the depth which observes everything from its own viewpoint. He is interested in Egyptian history with all his heart, knows the hieroglyphs and wants to become an Egyptologist. Failing that, he will try to get into the general headquarters and specialize in war history. I told him to study a lot, graduate Latin and try to enroll at the university. If he is capable, he will succeed in what he wants. He is very emotional. He knows *Lohengrin* very well. He says his heredity is burdened. His father died in a psychiatric asylum. His younger brother is a somnambulist. All of them are very nervous.

¹²⁸ German: Glück auf!

¹²⁹ condom

I can leave the Academy with pleasure. At least one of them saw the greatness of the idea towards which I strive. Although he still doesn't know that this is Catholicism, he will see it with the time. He was glad, and so was I, that he was able to express his feelings to somebody. He confided to me his fears that he might be abnormal, because others laugh at him and because his world views are contrary to those of the others, although he has been among them for so long. I promised him we would keep correspondence, talk to each other through letters.

He asks the Almighty to show him the right way

I am putting the final touch to my diary, and I hope, I pray to the Almighty who determined the path for the sun and the stars, for every blade of grass and every ant, to show me henceforth the path to Chastity, to the great Art, to all that is Elevated and Eternal. May Faust wake up again and again; he seems to have fallen asleep here.

Concerns, grave concerns. Will I be with my dear parents for Christmas? The greatest of celebrations, the most beautiful memories awaken in a child when it smells the pine-tree and candles. Good bye.



Photogr. Aufnahmen u. Belogradare des k. u. k. milit. geogr. Institutes

Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt – view from the other side.

AT THE UNIVERSITY IN VIENNA

1915



Vienna

Enrolled at the Faculty of Law and privately at the Faculty of Philosophy

Ivan's parents finally realized that the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt was not an option for their son. With a heavy heart, they consented to Ivan's enrollment at the University of Vienna. But, following the wishes of his mother, he had to enroll at the Faculty of Law, not Philosophy as he had wanted. However, keeping it secret from his parents, Ivan enrolled in certain courses of the Faculty of Philosophy in which he was particularly interested. This was literature and the arts. In addition, he was preparing himself intensively for the exam in Latin which he did not learn in high school, as Latin was the precondition for his further studies at the University. He passed the Latin exam at the end of October 1915 in Sarajevo.

Confrontation with atheism and immorality, moral crisis, struggle and victory

In Vienna, Ivan laid a broad foundation for his literary, artistic and scientific education, his subsequent broad horizons and a deep religious culture. He observed everything, but accepted only what withstood the test of Catholic criteria. First of all, he observed and cultivated himself. Coming from a small-town environment to the University of Vienna, Ivan encountered a scientific and literary atheism, and its practical moral and social consequences. And, although already being a convinced Catholic, he wanted to lay down once and for all the account of the correctness of his convictions. The crisis of faith as well as the crisis of morals never had a strong and acute form in Ivan's life. Religion was taking more and more the place in his soul which had been previously occupied by art. But, this process did not go without struggle. He was preoccupied more and more with the key issues in Christian life. He faced an intellectual crisis of faith. When surrounded by nature, he was obsessed with pantheistic thoughts. He rejected them. The intellectual crisis of faith in Ivan's soul ended with a clear and decisive: *Credo!*

Ivan conquered also the moral crisis in his soul and his life. He was often in the company of young girls. From time to time he had to combat the sensual element which would surface in him. But these were only brief moments. He fought valiantly and emerged victorious in this, perhaps the most difficult of crises for a young man. He wrote in his Diary on 12 December 1915:

“I am at peace, perhaps for good, with nature; the female element has played out its role in my life. I have no more dealings to do with women. I will not fall in love, as this could degenerate into sensuality... The other day I promised to the Blessed Virgin chastity until marriage; but maybe it will last until the end of my life.”¹³⁰ Before going into the army, Ivan wrote the following sentence in his Diary: “Chastity, eternal chastity should be my motto!”¹³¹

Guided by God’s grace he overcame both crises. Once they had been dealt with for good, Ivan placed God in the first place in his soul. Since that time, he knew of only one goal in life: to get as close to God as he could.

Cultural and social activities

In spite of weak eyes, Ivan read numerous novels, dramas and poems and gave extensive accounts and analyses of them in his Diary. He was a frequent theatre-goer as well as a visitor of Vienna’s museums and galleries. He used to buy reproductions of art works in the form of postcards which are preserved to this day and kept in his museum in Zagreb. On Sunday afternoons, he used to go into nature. The night sky strewn with stars never failed to amaze him and he mentioned it in his Diary too.

Following enrollment at the University, he became member of the Catholic Academic Society “Croatia” which was founded in 1903 for the benefit of Croatian students in Vienna and which was the root of the later Croatian Catholic Movement, initiated by the bishop from Krk Antun Mahnić. Ivan diligently attended the Saturday meetings, took part in lively debates, and occasionally even gave lectures. This was his main social environment. However, he was also critical of some members of the Society who were not in line with the moral goals of the Society and the Christian world-view, and he wrote about this in his Diary.

Long after graduating from high school and going to Vienna, Ivan stayed in contact with his teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković who continued to exert a positive influence on Ivan’s further cultural, spiritual and religious development. Ivan wrote to him often, and Maraković responded by giving him advice, motivating him to read books of value, debating with him on various issues in art and literature and the like. In one letter dated 15 June 1915, Ivan described his inner crises and struggles which he managed to overcome. This letter is an important illustration of his inner turmoil and crises that he had faced and we inserted it in the Diary from the period where it chronologically belongs.

Ivan completed this first period of his student life on 28th February 1916, when he said farewell to Banja Luka, entered the army, and thereafter went to war. This was a period which mostly contributed to his full commitment to God and Catholic faith which will become his life’s calling.

¹³⁰ Although he does not expressly state it, by the proximity of dates it is apparent that he took the vow of chastity on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the 8th December 1915. He was then 19. The motivation to take this vow probably originated from the practice of the Marian Congregation whose member Ivan was during high school.

¹³¹ Diary, 28 February 1916

DIARY

17 January 1915 – 28 February 1916

Vienna, 17 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

Propensity for thinking, prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary

I haven't been writing for almost a month. I accommodated my desire and came here to learn law. All the tasks are almost completed and gradually I am becoming a man.

*I think, therefore I am.*¹³² Indeed, until now I have had little opportunity to think. Here everything is motivating me to think. If I see a gothic church or building, a baroque theatre – I think; if I see artistic paintings – I admire them, if I go to theatre I cannot even recollect all my impressions. From now onwards I think I will keep a diary; this is where I will analyze all the impressions which occur during the day.

My prayer is now turned towards the Immaculate One: let her escort me in every step in this city. Let all my movements, all that I see be directed towards the beautiful. In general, I want to take pleasure only in the beautiful. I think first of all of the theatre. I will buy tickets for the theatre at subscription prices and will try to become enraptured by all that is elevated. The same is with all other arts. My motto is Keats's words *A thing of beauty is a joy forever.*¹³³ It is only with Beauty that one can come to the Source.



Ivan Merz – student in Vienna

Vienna, 18 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

Gathering artistic postcards

I am enrolled. I spoke at length with Rešetar. He is an especially kind man. He asked me about Glušac and Čorović. He also asked me to get him some old Bosnian banknotes.

There are beautiful artistic postcards here. I bought *Mater Purissima* by Morelli, the *Sistine Madonna*,¹³⁴ Head of Christ by Reine and Liotard's *Chocolatière*. It's a pity I

¹³² Latin: *Cogito ergo sum*. A famous saying by the philosopher René Descartes.

¹³³ A saying by the English romantic poet John Keats (1795–1821).

¹³⁴ Here Merz does not refer to the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, but Raphael's painting of the *Sistine Madonna* which got its name by St. Sixtus' monastery in Piacenza for which it was painted. Merz also

don't have more money. I take some strange pleasure in pictures. Madonna and Jesus are particularly beautiful. That drop of blood on the head is terrible. In any case the religious paintings are the deepest of all.

They play Ibsen and others in the theatres. I must find out what are the cheapest places and hope to find books in the University library to prepare myself. I learnt Latin.

Vienna, 22 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

Worried for his eyes

I write, but I don't see what I am writing. They gave me atropine at the clinic. I am worried: worried for my eyes.

It is very nice here. The landlady's daughter is intelligent.¹³⁵

If I go blind, it would be terrible. God forbid. I created my entire spiritual life by looking and what if it all disappeared?! I am not so much attached to music. I will try to practice piano from time to time, to learn the pieces by heart, because who knows...

You eternal Mother, You who are the embodiment of Poetry, of everything beautiful and eternal, let me go on receiving the gifts of beauty!

Vienna, 27 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

Admiring Christ in the Eucharist

Thank God, I can see enough to be able to write. I find it hard to read. I would like my eyes to be normal, not to lose so much time. I am lagging behind in Latin. I will have to work a lot if I want to make up for all that I missed.

On Sunday, I will receive Communion. It is incomprehensible that Christ, God the creator, the One towards whom everything strives, whom one feels when sleeping and when awake, the One who is strong and all-powerful, who is the mover of the universe, the One who cares about every blade of grass and every little worm, Christ whose arms and legs were pierced by nails, whom they spat upon, the One who raised the dead and loved children, the one who obscured the sun at his moment of death, and shook the earth, that he will be mine, that he will talk with me, a man whose spiritual recesses are known only to me. In this I see that it is Him, because in this He is showing his immeasurable love.



mentions it in his diary on 7 January 1916. This painting gave him a special inspiration in the struggle for moral purity.

¹³⁵ In Vienna Ivan rented a room near the University, in the 8th district, Löwenburggasse 2, 2nd floor, apt. 20.

Vienna – Kärtnerstrasse at the beginning of the 20th century.

Walk along the Viennese Kärtnerstrasse

Yes, the Earth is spinning around. This I know, we learn this in school. I am strolling through the brightly lit Kärtnerstrasse. Various people, ladies with huge hats, red caps and white and black shoes, officers with bright buttons and cloaks. The cars pass, then the bicycles, buses and other things. Suspicious ladies, with tightened belts, wearing caps, with red and blue hair over the ears, flagrantly weave their way among the public. Some young man in a cloak with buttons, gray hat and stick with a white knob follows them from behind, throwing lustful glances at them. They don't look, only turn inadvertently at him and weave their way further – the young man trailing behind.

Amazed at the star-lit night sky

I had enough of walking. I left the noise and the bright lights and only now I noticed that it is full moon, that it showers its silvery light on the roofs and gardens. There are a million stars in the sky. Those near the moon are whiter; those toward the horizon have a yellowish hue.

I leaned on the fence and looked upwards. The stars competed in twinkling. I saw a silvery cloud slowly sliding, coming closer to the moon and reflecting even more of the silvery light. It covered the moon but the moonlight was clearly visible through it. Its edges were silvery and yellowish and clearly distinguishable. Then the image changed. The right part has fallen apart, and the left shone even more. At once the moon appeared again in all its beauty.

The movement of the Earth and heavenly bodies

I looked and looked at all this beauty. The stars were still twinkling. I turned towards the Great Bear, the Pleiades, Sirius, everything was twinkling. Looking upwards, I seemed to lose touch with the ground beneath me. I could feel the Earth turning, that the twinkling is only the consequence of this rotation. I felt alone on this orb, and the Earth and me travelled and turned through the universe. The moon is turning too, as well as all the stars. They chased the Great Bear whistling in their direction. Everything is one giant movement, every star has its path, passing beside one another without colliding. The Earth continues to move, to turn around.

The Spirit permeates the heavenly beauty, but people don't care

Where do all these worlds come from, whence this infinity, this orderly movement, this beauty? I feel the silvery threads of the Spirit who holds it all, who is nothing else but silk full of music playing silvery, extremely high melodies. I can see the threads of this Spirit in the shining Moon, in the stars, in the silvery dew which covers the fence. The entire universe and the whole soul is filled with this Spirit, and I am overcome with the desire to shake off the dust and to raise myself to his feet and to listen with my head bowed down and with closed eyes the melodies of his harp which reverberates like thunder and whose wavy sound turns again into a silent melody.

"State of emergency",¹³⁶ somebody woke me up. I snapped awake. What – isn't the whole world raising its eyes, its heart toward Eternity? – "*Great successes in Bukovina*"¹³⁷ – God, what is it? No, they've forgotten you; the worms fight, bite and kill. Have they gone mad? With such a beautiful sky, how is it possible?! I quickly left the park and mingled among the people with a balmy feeling inside me. The boys and women shouted

¹³⁶ German: Extrausgabe

¹³⁷ German: Grosse Erfolge in der Bukovina

“*State of emergency*”, the world stood in front of the window reading the most recent telegrams.

Vienna, 28 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

Review of the lectures, criticism of bad behavior

Today I got up a bit earlier. I studied Latin, then I went to the lecture in French. The professor talked about the key works of Maribeau, especially on *Marianne*, a work indigestible because of its numerous digressions. I am very interested in that. In the afternoon, I again studied Latin, but didn't do much because my eyes are still weak.

Professor Jurenka is an odd man. Even when serious, he seems to be grinning. His mouth is wide. With his good-natured blue eyes, he jumps from one subject to another, raising the skin on his forehead which creates horizontal lines: “*Remember this, gentlemen*”¹³⁸, he says raising the forefinger of the right hand. I was again on the Corso. My yesterday's account was rather successful. The image of Kärtnerstrasse must be portrayed even better. I saw at an exhibition the semi-act of Bukovac's “maid”. I feel sorry for Pelz. I like him because of his love for children. He warned me about the rudeness of some members of “Croatia”¹³⁹. True, there are several among them who are most uncultured, who swear and talk of lascivious things only, etc.

Vienna, 29 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

He is happy, describes the impressions that art works make on him, looking forward to Communion

I am happy, simply happy. Everything is going well. I see a beautiful picture – I am happy, I see good people – I am happy, I dress nicely – I am happy.

I saw Segantini's paintings *At the Plough* and *In Spring*. The first of them is particularly beautiful: until now I haven't seen such a beautiful landscape¹⁴⁰. I imagined myself being in the Alps, looking at those horses, fields and those mountains. I saw a lot of Böcklin's paintings. *Herbstgedanken* reproduced in black and white is better than in color. Water is particularly beautiful. Jansen, a scientist from Egmont can be compared to *Falstaff*. An enormously strong figure of a literate man from the 16th century; a lot of humor mixed with cunning and patriotism. The language he uses is unsurpassed.

I am very much looking forward to receiving Communion.

Vienna, 31 January 1915 – (18 years and 1 month)

A better understanding of love, perceives the predominance of reason over the emotions inside him, some devil tempts him to doubt

Plach came to me. He was drafted into the army. For memory, he wrote several very beautiful sentences from Emilija's letter. He confided to me being in love with Emilija. (Here follows a part of the letter by Emilija Stiks, Rudolf Plach's girlfriend, which Plach wrote with his own hand in Merz's Diary)

Now I realized that love truly exists, that all these love phrases are an outpouring of a strange feeling, unknown to me. The eternal female draws us to itself.¹⁴¹ Truly, I am surprised by the warmth and conviction of Miss Stiks's love towards Plach and the other way around. I believe that I am not capable of such deep emotions. In me, regrettably,

¹³⁸ German: Merken sie sich, meine Herren!

¹³⁹ Members of the Croatian Catholic Student Society in Vienna

¹⁴⁰ French: *En plein air* : “in the open”; used to describe the art of painting in open space

¹⁴¹ German: Das Ewig-weibliche zieht uns hinan.

reason is more at work, critical analysis and upbringing. What I see as noble in myself may not originate from emotions, but reason tells me that it is good and I act accordingly. In general, human nature is complicated, there is a devil who meddles into the deepest and most noble things so much that it makes me doubt in everything I have built inside myself with enormous effort.

I wrote to my parents, Plach's parents and Miss Stiks.

Going to church and Communion

This morning I went to church. In the afternoon, I went to the "Croatia" Society. Buconjić was elected president. He seems good. Life is beautiful! The day after tomorrow I will receive Communion.

Vienna, 9 February 1915 – (18 years and 2 months)

Remembering Greta, thoughts about war, giving a lecture on Parsifal in the "Croatia" Society.

I thought of Greta. I would love to go visit her parents to see the furniture, especially the piano. Sad memories connect me to that place. I was in the ZFV Society which has as its motto *All are one in Christ*¹⁴². A professor of Lutheran theology discussed the issue of war in Christianity. He opposes war. I don't know whether I am for or against it. It goes without saying, I think only of the wars for liberation. The current war was unavoidable.

I saw *Parsifal*. The impression was great, but not complete. I must see it once again. In the "Croatia" Society I gave an introduction to *Parsifal*, and I am due to continue next Saturday. I am glad Wayner liked Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*. I am working on my Latin little by little.

Vienna, 15 February 1915 – (18 years and 2 months)

Review and comments on a theatrical piece that he saw

I returned from Raymund's theatre. I saw *Verschwender*. A rich man squanders his wealth. He also gave to the poor.

(Here follows a brief account of the content of the drama and his comments)

The piece is moralizing. I think it might be good if it were modified a bit. The peasants love to watch things which triumphantly end up good.

Vienna, 18 February 1915 – (18 years and 2 months)

Analysis of a piece he saw in theatre

I just came from the Burgstheater. On the program were Wallenstein, Lager and Piccolomini. Regrettably I didn't hear everything precisely. What I saw and understood was truly wonderful.

(Here follows a brief account of the content of the drama and a critique of the main characters)

The issue of love occupies him again

There is a nagging question in my mind, like Bazarov's, whether love exists or not; is it something physiological, corporeal. Tolstoy denies love towards a woman that was celebrated in verse. Turgenev in *Fathers and Children* portrays Bazarov to whom, like

¹⁴² Latin: Omnes unum in Christo.

Tolstoy, reason says that love is purely animal. Bazarov exaggerates a bit, but if I only think of his relationship with Arkadia: she loves him, but won't admit it to him. On his part, he feels that she is something apart from the others, that there is some unknown passion for her which is not borne out of animalism, but caused by some spiritual, mysterious female features.

Love is his sphynx, remembering his love of Greta

To me love is a sphynx. Reason tells me it doesn't exist, but when I think of Greta, I must admit that love exists. True, it had animal consequences in me. Nevertheless, I love Greta even now, and as I feel regenerated after her death, I think that, if she were alive, I would kneel before her asking for forgiveness for considering her an animal; but, this is past and love draws me to her. This love is not friendship, this is something else that cannot be verbalized – a sphynx?!

Criticizes Croatian Catholic students who behave immorally

Tomorrow I am travelling home for a court hearing.¹⁴³ This is an account of what I did. I studied Latin more than was requested. I am nevertheless dissatisfied; I wish I had done more. I studied *Parsifal* thoroughly and gave a lecture in the "Croatia" Society. There was no debate. These people are not in their right mind. They swear, chase girls and are no different than all the others. I don't know why they are members of a Croatian Catholic Organization, how do they intend to cultivate new fields in a Catholic way when they are partly un-Catholic. Generally, they lack a deeper outlook upon the world. They do not experience the problems of inner struggle and inner perfection. E.g. Puljić – the ex-Franciscan. Terribly one-sided. For him philosophy and history are everything, whereas he ignores, moreover insults the fine arts, music, dance and other things. One day he will be a teacher and educate people! He won't succeed in that. Otherwise he is good and courteous. I was in Prater and on Kahlen's hill.

¹⁴³ Here Merz gives no details about this court hearing. However, we know about it from other sources. Some of Merz's colleagues, as he himself mentions at the beginning of his Diary, while still in high school (Diary, 1 May 1914) were involved in secret organizations for the overthrowing of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and for the freedom of Bosnia and the establishment of the Yugoslav state. After the assassination in Sarajevo, Austro-Hungarian authorities found out about this and arrested some of his colleagues, about which Merz writes in his diary. He was not member of these organizations, but knew of many of his colleagues who were. Judicial proceedings were initiated and Merz was invited to give testimony in court against his colleagues. Naturally, he didn't do it. Two of his accused colleagues, one Muslim and one Serb later gave written testimonies of Merz's behavior at court.

Ahmet Kulenović (Jajce): "Merz was an ideal of integrity and honesty, which he especially showed in the Technical high school pupils' trial of 1915. I myself was one of the accused due to disturbance of public law and order. With his testimony at the court in Banja Luka and Travnik, where we were finally sentenced, he acted as a man whom even a nation of a hundred million people could be proud of. We, the accused, got the impression that the public prosecutor expected Merz to simply confirm the indictment against us from the beginning to the end, but when Merz gave his testimony, the poor prosecutor didn't know what to do, because Merz spoke conscientiously, truly and honestly before the court" (cf. B. Nagy, *Warrior from the White Mountains*, Zagreb, 1971, p. 51, in Croatian)

Milan Janković (Banja Luka). "Among the witnesses there was a graduate student Hans Merz. But he refused to be a puppet of the public prosecutor Weinert. He was a good colleague and friend of our "triumvirate". His testimony at the main hearing where he could (according to Weinert's expectation) make life really hard for us was in fact our defense. Hans's soul couldn't accuse anybody. He was a good Christian – an idealist. He said: "They were my good comrades and were always in good relations with me. I know nothing of anything illegal that they did or spoke". Weinert, disappointed, said that Merz was a religious fanatic, too religious and spoilt when he speaks so mildly about such "criminals". (cf. M. Janković, *Freedom and Yugoslavia – a pre-War Secret Pupils' Societies, the Banja Luka Process 1914 – 1915*, Banja Luka 1939, p. 53, in Croatian. Also, B. Nagy, *Warrior from the White Mountains*, Zagreb, 1971, p. 51, in Croatian)

Banja Luka, 28 February 1915 – (18 years and 2 months)

Taking pleasure in beauty and desire for strenuous work

I was writing in my other notebook. I am going back to Vienna tomorrow. I am dissatisfied. Here is the feeling which I focus upon: I enjoy a painting, I enjoy Wagner's opera. I enjoy everything that is beautiful and I am dying of thirst for beauty. After every moment of pleasure, I snap out of it, and I see – I did nothing and there is such a lot to do. I want work, enormous work which will engulf me, so that I can think of nothing else. Perhaps work itself can be a source of pleasure, i.e. it prevents the feelings of dissatisfaction to appear. Work, toil and do all you have to do. Don't think! Be a machine.

And I love her, though I know that she is not the chosen one of my heart. I cannot love her. I am trying to love her, to make her love me without questions about knowledge and everything I accumulated within myself.

Vienna, 4 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Clearly feels the existence of a soul, careful of outward appearance

I visited my parents. It was wonderful. My life is study and study only. Chances are I will fail the Latin exam. I still know nothing. This mustn't happen, so therefore I am only studying Latin.

Today I feel clearly that the soul exists. I wonder how come my inner *self*, that which constitutes my being, is enclosed within a body by which the world knows me. Whatever body I might have, the face of Plach or X or Y, I still remain the same. I feel this so clearly. Observing people, I shouldn't look at outward appearances at all, but penetrate into the soul. Outward appearances only irritate. A pure soul is visible in the look, in the beauty of the face. When looking at women it is difficult to penetrate into their essence because the magnetism of beautiful forms tarnishes clear vision. One should rise to such heights that while looking at a woman one doesn't have the slightest feeling that one is looking at a woman. Only then can the Eternal female be discovered. Not before.

Vienna, 8 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Listening to a Brahms concert, reads Bourget

Yesterday I was in Wiener Konzerthaus. They played Brahms's Symphony in D-major. The first part was beautiful. Not that I understood it. Kuliš was at my place today. Earlier I thought of him as a trader, but now I see that he is a true lover of art and that he exceptionally loves the Beurons.¹⁴⁴ A strange coincidence that we met.

Bourget writes in a particularly beautiful manner: *The outer triumphs and defeats show the inner qualities and insufficiencies.*¹⁴⁵ He works on the reorganization of the French society. I did some Latin.

Vienna, 10 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Criticizes Rilke's view of Rodin, because this is the decline of morale

A candle burns on my table. Soon it will be midnight. I still hear the music, see the dead Werther and the winter landscape. It would be interesting to describe the impression of Werther, to analyze him, but analyzing myself seems much more important at this

¹⁴⁴ Artists who created their art works under the influence of the German Benedictine monastery Beuron

¹⁴⁵ French: Que les triomphes et les defaites du dehors traduisent les qualités et les insufficances du dedans.

point. It is about the following sentences from the work of Rainer Maria Rilke about Rodin¹⁴⁶:

(Here follows a quotation in German from Rilke's work about Rodin in which the author, describing Rodin's naked sculptures glorifies bodily pleasure without any moral constraints)

If I agree to these thoughts, it means I am throwing away my whole ideology and start building a new one. These words shake the existence of morals. Do they? Rodin's naked bodies are wonderful. It is true that the passion towards a woman is a natural instinct. But, God, is it more of an artistic nature? (*Is it like a gold digger?*) At night, he gets up silently, sneaks up to her bed and looks beautiful... a wonderful play of nature. But why look; one ought to experience it oneself. I imagine myself sneaking towards the bed... But woe, that which is in me pulls me toward her with demonic power, while something is telling me: "Stop, you are doing wrong". It is all about these two things: shall I go to her and drink delight from the embrace of our bodies... And live and die in that delight. But, even in this delight I will not find true pleasure.

Renunciation of worldly pleasures for the sake of reward in heaven

This powerful, demonic pleasure is holding us, but at once we stand up. We hear: *Memento mori – remember death*. What is holding you now shall pass, only one thing will remain after you and that which will remain did not consume the delight of those demonic moments. Not to enjoy means struggling against nature, as a matter of fact, denying it. I feel strongly that there is life after death and that this demonic life has nothing to do with it. It exists purely for the principle of justice. Justice is not a principle, but a spark within us and it tells us, if we want to achieve something we must really burn out. Rodin's sculptures are wonderful, magnificent, burning with life, and the larger and more shining they are, the greater the pride for us, if we suppressed the greatness of this transient luminance for the sake of the luminance of eternal beauty which for the moment is still untouchable by our senses.

Life is a sacrifice, one shouldn't look at many beautiful things! Danger of female beauty

Generally, I came to a conclusion: the battle against modern views is, it seems to me, concluded. Life must be a sacrifice, and we shouldn't look at many beautiful things. I must now judge myself for having looked at a beautiful lady showing her cleavage in the opera. It is a fact that female beauty has something enchanting, beautiful within itself and in these transient moments we must always close our eyes and contemplate only the eternal content. Life is a mighty struggle which requires me to burn out, not to look at the beautiful. It is due to this struggle that a man's life attains a higher purpose. To fight passion for a beautiful woman, conquer it and rise to those heights where the passion is not felt any more, but to look at the woman as one looks at a man, means to achieve the greatest of victories. Many people have perished because they succumbed to the demonic beauty of a woman. I almost got caught too. But from now on I declare: to close my eyes and not seek this principle of beauty which is only here and now, and to set up a battle whose reward is eternity.

L'Art-pour-l'art is the glorification of the devil

The principle of Rodin's art is *l'art-pour-l'art* which cannot be justified because it is the glorification of the devil, glorification of the beauty which is a visible, momentary, sensual pleasure. It is the glorification of the transient nature which builds by destroying. The art ought to glorify a battle against this beauty; if, however, it creates such a beauty,

¹⁴⁶ Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), French sculptor

the tendency must not be its glorification as if a different kind of art didn't exist, but should be presented as evil which results in something good.

Vienna, 12 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Analysis of the moral and immoral in dance, attitude of the Church

Today I wanted to study Latin more than I did. I didn't do it because I couldn't resist the desire to read as much as I can from the history of dance. The book is written very well. It starts from the beginning¹⁴⁷ – from nature to man. Further on, it explains the history of dance. Very interesting reading. The history of dance is a cultural history of a people. We know of Egyptian dancers, of dances in honor of Dionysus and the bacchanalia. Finally, the Christian era in the lewdness of dance does not lag much behind paganism. The attitude of the Church toward dance is interesting. It both attacked and defended it. St. Basil recommends it, while other Church assemblies condemn it. Of course, they do. It is not dance as an expression of feeling which is being condemned, dance as an art, but the degeneration of dance is condemned, immoral movements. They have nothing to do with dance and they often led to evil. In observing dance one should be very careful. Here, like in sculpture – Rodin – it is an expression of the desire, longing for a woman. One finds this in folk dances, but here the yearning is not for the Eternal female, but a simple gratification of passion. Such is the majority of Spanish dances. If I take a wheel dance and compare it to other peoples, I can grasp the greatness of our Croatian and Serbian folk in Bosnia. These are morose dances which, with the accompaniment of extended melodies, express the waves of tranquil and contented emotions. Actually, these expressions of pleasure are exaggerated, lacking in life energy. When I think of a wheel dance, I remember the work *Our Cop* by Đalski.

Is sensuality in art and dance justified?

I steered a bit off my track. Is it justified that sensuality is glorified in art, even in the mildest form? Or, is one allowed to take the images of the sensual, I am free to say even sexual life, to symbolize or express an inner feeling, an idea?!

Tolstoy says that all the arts are merely an expression of sensual longing and that due to that they cannot be justified. He is partly right. Dance, sculpture, painting, music and literature are all that. I have doubts about architecture. Dance, as I have said, led to corruption. It became pure bodily pleasure (ancient Rome!). Such dance is surely unjustifiable. But, in present-day salons there is dancing which is not pleasure in itself, but which with most refined movements expresses the desire for pleasure. The goal is simply sensuality. It does not proceed from that that dance is unjustified. It must represent with outer movements the inner states of the soul, and even more, represent friendship, love, etc. One must use one's body in that. We should not condemn even if one point of this dance was a kiss. It might express the solidarity of a soul. Dance is art, an expression of the striving towards eternal beauty, not sensuality.

Moral dilemmas about nudes in art, Rodin and Sinding

Is a nude in sculpture justified? I myself am not in the clear regarding this. I believe it is. But, a nude must not be used only for expressing sensuality; coming back to love – it must be a means for expressing spiritual greatness. I do not judge Rodin's *Kiss* in the same way as Rilke does who says that here that type of love is presented which draws the male sex toward the female. In my view, this is an expression of love in a spiritual sense. Every inner state is reflected on the outside, so that this adherence in *Kiss* is being painted in

¹⁴⁷ Latin: *ab ovo* (literal: from the egg).

nudes too. I may be wrong. But, let's take Sinding's¹⁴⁸ *Kiss*. Sinding presented the depth of love better, only he does not possess the technical skill of Rodin. Rodin's nude could evoke sensuality in someone. Sinding's never! After all, do the Greek sculptures evoke sensuality? Never. That's why I say, nude in art is justified, it only depends on the tendency, what it is used for. If one wanted, one could produce a face which evokes sensuality. But this is a touchy question: why is sensuality inborn in man. When a nude is allowed, and does not evoke sensuality, how come I know that a girl that would uncover herself to me would commit evil. This very natural question refutes the sophisms in favor of the nudes.



A. Rodin – *Kiss* (a sculpture)

A never-ending story of the relationship of body and soul

I did not arrive at anything definitively, and I conclude this story with a big question mark. Time will tell. It is a fact that a Madonna made by a simpler painter evokes greater enthusiasm and leaves stronger reminiscences than a nude by Velasquez. This shows what real art is. Humans are destined to deal with these unhappy questions about the body and soul. This never ends. One cannot draw a dividing line, because we are both. Micika¹⁴⁹ likes Rilke: “*One shouldn't be so narrow-minded*”¹⁵⁰ she says when I told her that my world views do not agree with Rilke. If she upholds the view that the animal instinct in man, heroism and natural beauty are the principles of good, she should be immoral. And truly, she is not. We live in an age full of contradictions.

Vienna, 14 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

The death of Eckert, comment on operas and judgement of their value

Eckert¹⁵¹ has died. They say that Spreiser the elder was killed. All men of value are dying. Wagner resolved the problem of art in *Tannhäuser*. From the mount of Venus, he exits with a cry *towards Mary*. A path is traced from Rodin to Raphael. At least that's how it seems. Wagner proved in *Tannhäuser* that the problem of the nude has the right to exist in art, if it is the carrier of a decadent idea.

I finished the book about dance. Nicely written. One ought to learn it all. I didn't do any Latin. I will do so tomorrow. I wanted to go to the Volksoper to see Rossini's

William Tell. The remake of Schiller's works is an assassination of art. I now see that the literary value of operas is nil. It is only melody which predominates. These opera

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Sinding (1846–1922), a Norwegian and Danish sculptor

¹⁴⁹ Micika, the daughter of Merz's landlady

¹⁵⁰ German: Mann muss nicht so engherzig sein.

¹⁵¹ Rudolf ECKERT (Travnik, 1889 – Rijeka, 1915), a young Catholic intellectual with a doctorate, lived a saintly life. He specialized journalism in Munich and Louvain. Edited *Riječke novine*. Drafted in the Austro-Hungarian army at the beginning of World War I, fell ill and died with a reputation of holiness. His biography was written by Petar Grgec (published in 1995)

writers lack a deeper view of the world. It is said of the young Brahms that he had no talent for drama. Ivić¹⁵² came to visit me yesterday.

Vienna, 16 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Conversation with colleagues about the people, review of a text by M. Gorky, enthusiastic about Faust

I went to visit Ivić in the monastery. Poljaković and Vlado came with me, or rather, I came with them. We talked about all kinds of things. Mostly about the life of the people, the public morals and immorality. They were telling jokes. I didn't do a thing. I read *Emelyan Pilyai*.¹⁵³ A beautiful story: we see all the desperation of these poor people who are in their nature extremely noble, people in the full sense of the word. They lose their ideals only because of a bad organization of the state. They survive hunger, live worse than animals. I leafed through *Faust* again. The more I read it, the more I admire it. Kuliš went to Prague yesterday to join the army.¹⁵⁴

+ Cum Deo

Vienna, 17 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)¹⁵⁵

Vow to St. Anthony for healing of the eyes

Seido was here in the afternoon. We talked and took a walk. I worked a little. Time goes by in vain. Yesterday I made a vow to St. Anthony that for two months – until the 15th May – I will not eat sweets, if only my eyes get to normal. Help me God!

Vienna, 18 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Everyday events, the Blessed Virgin Mary helps

I did some Latin. A postcard from Viktorija came. In the afternoon, I was trying to find the *Künstlerhaus*. Without success. I went for a walk with Ivić talking French. I saw a soldier without legs and one arm. A lady from the Red Cross pushed him in a wheelchair. I read Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Again, some social conflict which doesn't leave a deeper, artistic impression; about the conflict itself, I will think later. I talked with the landlady and her daughter about death. The landlady is particularly good natured. When she sees beautiful flowers, she is almost moved to tears. She was telling me of her husband's illness. She prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary to keep him in this life. At night, she dreamt that Jesus came in a white garment while an old lady was praying to him for her. She described it all very nicely. Another instance: she saw a piece of tin on the floor. She threw it away. Tomorrow she found it again in the same place where she had found it the first time. Her son picked it up, wiped away the dirt and she noticed that it was the picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her daughter said that whatever she asked from Mother, her wishes were granted. There are strange things in this world, my friend Horace!

¹⁵² Fr Kazimir Ivić, OFM, subsequently director of the Franciscan Classical High School in Visoko

¹⁵³ Russian story by Maxim Gorky

¹⁵⁴ This is the end of the 2nd notebook of I. Merz's Diary which covers a period from 7 December 1914 until 16 March 1915.

¹⁵⁵ This is the beginning of the 3rd notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 17 March 1915 until 24 June 1915.

Vienna, 23 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

Impressions from a visit to a gallery, analysis of Goethe's drama Torquato Tasso

Ljuba sent me a postcard. This morning I was in the gallery. I didn't expect to see such great names represented: Rembrandt, Raphael. The works from the 15th and 16th century failed to make a deep impression on me. They all express the same thought: an epic story of love. Generally, the entire painting of the Renaissance contains nothing lyric in itself. It is all a story of love and the life of Christ. When I left the gallery, I felt dizzy. My brain couldn't take so many paintings and impressions at once.

A little while ago I came from the Burg. Goethe's drama Torquato Tasso was on. Goethe is truly a great poet. Elevated and dignified. You don't see any stupid passions and children's stuff on the stage, easy loves and infidelities, but everything is a battle and experience of great, eternal emotions. There is not much content, but a lot of psychology and thoughts. Tasso's character is so suggestive that we cannot imagine the historic Tasso being any different. He is a poet who lives in conversation with nature, who draws all his riches from within himself (Schiller), who doesn't care for the outer, worldly appearance. (...)

Mother sent me bread. She thinks I am hungry. Ah, my good mother! I barely think of her, but she doesn't forget me.

I didn't do any Latin today.

Vienna, 24 March 1915 – (18 years and 3 months)

I studied Latin. I made a sketch of Torquato Tasso.

Vienna, 4 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Article for the Luč Magazine, impressions of Good Friday, hike in the mountains

Buconjić asked me if I have an article for *Luč*. To write it I have to study Turgenev again, and complete his views on life. My aim is to present Turgenev as a universally educated man, as a lover of all the arts, and bring him into contrast with Dostoevsky's and Tolstoy's ethics. I think I will manage to do it in two days, and then I will get back to my Latin.

On Good Friday I visited some churches. The sun was shining, beautiful and sad. On all the faces, in every grin of various categories of people there was something sad – the feeling of war and Good Friday.

I received Communion today. The afternoon I spent in Baden. I had a longing to be in nature. I had felt helpless and wrecked wandering along the stinking streets, but when I came to Baden, my natural good mood and cheerfulness returned. It was wonderful in the park. There is a beautiful view opening on the wavy hills, the precursors of the Alps. Down between the hills and the place on which I was standing there settled a nicely arranged small town. I went to the cliffs, looked down into the gaping depth on the white winding road, and was overcome by desire to have wings and to fly over this abyss.

Situation on the battlefield is bad and behind it a system of protection and immorality

Situation on the battlefield is bad. In the Chief Headquarters they pour champagne. Mostar and Sarajevo are being evacuated. Premisl is already in Russian hands.

And indeed, this is all due to that gentleman in *Crime and Punishment* who stood by the bench in a vulgar manner looking at the groggy girl whom men have dressed.

We have no bread. The philistines want cakes, they have flour and are mad when we are not succeeding up there. Once again, if we perish, we deserved it.

Once again: in the Chief Headquarters they drink champagne! The Khuens are the ruler's illegitimate children, they sent the archduke Schemon into retirement because he

didn't pronounce Khuen's full title correctly and threw him out of the bed at noon! A system of protection and immorality must be punished. So many peoples will wail and be clad in black. Instead of immersing themselves in the growing of plants, the flight of a star, in the beauty of the Madonna, people fornicate all over Vienna. Patriots, you will win – just hope for that!

Vienna, 5 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Uncle Georg has died. Peace be upon his soul. An unexpected death is still incomprehensible to me, I cannot fathom it... Ljuba sent me Easter greetings.

Vienna, 8 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Plan for the article on Turgenev

"...But in everything I was thinking, in everything I was feeling, there was a hidden, half-felt, shy presentiment of something new, unspeakably sweet, female..." Turgenev, *The First Love*.

It is possible I feel similarly because I am under the impression of Turgenev's emotions. I think I will be ready to start writing about Turgenev tomorrow. I read so many of his works that a number of scenes are mixed up in my head, but I think I have a good plan. Firstly, to present the reflection of Turgenev's life in his works, then the analysis of three groups (love, individualistic and social), and finally to give general characteristics of Turgenev, how he portrays a modern, universal man (Goethe, Beethoven, Puskhin...!). It outlining his works, I will stick to Brunetière; the development of a personal novel (a separate kind of literature! – not epics!). I didn't do any Latin.

Looking for female company, the problem with the vow to St. Anthony

Though I was tired, I went to Petrović. Actually – to tell the truth – not to him. I was drawn...I was looking for something female... and I found it. She isn't at all beautiful, but those words, the laughter... it all reminded me of Greta. They aren't similar in the least. But, about her some other time! I like her a lot because she is full of that female, shy, mysterious... a long time will pass... possibly I will never see her again. How could I go to Petrović again? I respect him, but I don't like him. He feels the same about me.

I didn't keep my vow to St. Anthony very strictly. Who am I kidding? The situation is as follows: I received cakes from home, and I am eating them in order not to have to buy bread, than otherwise not. I think I didn't do wrong, because I said in my vow that I will try to eat as few sweets as I can manage. God, I hope I have not sinned.

Vienna, 10 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

A review and analysis of Beethoven's 9th Symphony

I listened to Beethoven's 9th Symphony. I like it immensely. In the first part, one is touched by the void, the despair and an enormous fight against the awkward interior. Nothing seems to work. Destiny is not overcome and with its void it fills the entire universe. I didn't quite understand the second part; but the misery and dissatisfaction after sensual pleasure push one into despair. In the third part, we see the glorious beauty of peasant life. It entices us, we submit to it, but still sensual pleasure attracts us. This process goes to and fro, until nature reveals to us the Creator; happy village melodies dance around Him (*ländlich!*). The fourth part is the most beautiful. We are happy, we have succeeded in battle and we enjoy wonderful nature and the Creator. This enjoyment is becoming stronger and stronger, turning into a powerful victorious anthem, which then dies down. It wants to express something, but cannot. Finally, words come to aid. The

words express what the music has felt but couldn't say. This song is an anthem to happiness, an anthem to God and love (Schiller's *Ode to Joy*).¹⁵⁶ Let the millions be overwhelmed! It is an anthem to the Creator. Faustian motifs, only better resolved than in *Faust*. Pleasure is not found in agriculture, but in the beauty of nature and an anthem to the Maker.

Vienna, 15 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Article for Luč completed, love in folk songs

I completed the article for *Luč*. It has about 40 pages. It came out rather well; only it is still somewhat unfinished. I should read once again *A Hunter's Sketches*, the novella *Faust*, *First Love* and others. Mujagić is writing it all in clean copy. He works very diligently. If he is done by tomorrow, the day after tomorrow I will study psychology in order to get a grant for my studies. I don't think I will learn it all in three days.

Tale was telling me a touching scene from the public house. A woman, probably driven to this "work" by poverty, when giving her body, cries. Apparently even among these people there are noble feelings. Here are the extracts from some characteristic folk songs.

(Here follows a transcript of a folk song which speaks about love between a young man and a girl)

These songs are wonderful, though they carry a lot of the erotic in them. But the shy and beautiful character of the girl is wonderfully mirrored. Naturally, this is not a real love which was ennobled by culture, but is natural in its naiveté, and the spiritual traits are closely connected with bodily acts. In this context, one shouldn't think of the worst. There are kisses, embraces, caresses. Anyway, folk art is great.

Vienna, 17 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Info-brochure about Croatia, criticizes the libertarian behavior of certain Croats

Yesterday I sent my article about Turgenev to *Luč*.¹⁵⁷ It finally came to 31 pages. I am curious to see whether they will publish it. I think they won't, due to extensiveness.

Today there was a meeting in the "Croatia" Society. The topic of the debate was a brochure that will be published in order to inform the outer world about Croatia. In my opinion, it doesn't make much sense. What are the Croats looking for? They always demand and demand, while wasting time in coffee rooms and partying. There are so many talented people, but everything is going down the drain. Now, when we ought to name the people who contributed something to entire humanity, such a name doesn't exist. We are demanding to be given our rights, but woe! – we can't come up with such names.

A short account and critique of Freytag's comedy Journaliste

Today I read a bit from psychology, and in the evening, at the last moment I decided to go to Burgstheater to see *Journaliste*. The piece is not bad, but if we consider that it is

¹⁵⁶ Ode to Joy – poem written by the German poet Friedrich Schiller in 1785 glorifying the ideals of brotherhood and a united mankind. [Ludwig van Beethoven](#) incorporated it into the final movement of his 9th Symphony. Today this is the Anthem of the European Union.

¹⁵⁷ This article – study about Turgenev was supposed to be the first published work of Ivan Merz. Unfortunately, as he himself predicted in his Diary, the article was not published in the *Luč* Magazine because it was too long. However, the original hand-written copy made by his colleague, soldier Mujagić, has been preserved in the Archive. Merz himself mentions this in his Diary of 15 April 1915. This article is an additional valuable document about Merz's great literary talent. One ought to bear in mind that it was written by a man who was only 18 at the time of writing. This work was finally published in the first volume of his Collected Works (Zagreb, 2011.), pp. 27–54.

listed among the best German comedies, we must say that this piece is bad. Molière – Freytag, incomparable. I think that Nušić's comedies are better. True, here also one finds beautiful characters. The female ones are well portrayed, while the male ones are everyday men with their weaknesses. Mainly, all the key characters are shallow.

Vienna, 18 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

An afternoon in nature

I spent an afternoon in nature, in the woods and in the meadows. It was a wonderful day; the first buds were already sprouting out on the branches, one could find violets. I went up and down the hills, jumping and lying on the grass, running, etc. When I returned, they told me there had been a procession which Vienna hasn't seen yet. I didn't see it and I am sorry. I didn't do a thing. I am a fool and a weakling.

Vienna, 20 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

A review of the contents and criticism of the dramatic tale The Drowned Bell by Gerhart Hauptmann

I saw Hauptmann's work *The Drowned Bell*.¹⁵⁸ When I initially read the work, I didn't understand it. I saw many beautiful lyric places and I felt that the coloring of the tale was successful. (...) This is the tragedy of enlighteners: they create great works on earth which enlighten only the people. They do not reach the upper spheres. (...)

(Here follows an overview of the contents of this dramatic tale)

Vienna, 22 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Passed the preliminary exam in psychology, remembers the Serbian teacher Glušac

Yesterday I passed with professor Jerusalem the preliminary exam in psychology with the mark *sehr gut* (very good). He asked me what are psychological dispositions, what is the present, etc. I knew them well. Generally, he doesn't demand a lot. He is a good man. This manner of learning at the University is great. One gets an impression about one's value – and one can develop individually. When I only think of the lower grades of high school, of teacher Glušac, who called me "cattle", so that I was desperate – I learned and learned the syntax, but I never knew a thing. I was convinced that I am an idiot.

Comparison between Parsifal and Christ in action

I spoke a little with Šantić about *Parsifal*. He thinks Parsifal is the true Christ. He fought like Christ against the devil and subjugated him. Kundri washes his feet like Mary Magdalen, etc. Indeed, there are many similarities with Christ; the very fact that Parsifal saved Kundri reminisces of Christ's mission. These are just the similarities, but I think that the idea of the work is actually opposition to Christ. In *Parsifal*, Wagner wanted to portray a man – all by himself as an ethical unit in the universe. This ethical unit attains knowledge only by means of compassion. Parsifal is ignorant (is Christ ignorant?) and he never knew what evil is. But if something evil happens, he knows immediately, although he never heard about it before, that this is not good. It means, there is an instinct in man about good and evil. Wagner shows in *Parsifal* how this develops (with Christ it didn't develop and it wasn't compassion which told Christ that he must fight. Christ acted out of love). This is a psychological thin line; Schopenhauer's compassion as a principle on the

¹⁵⁸ German.: Die versunkene Glocke

one hand is an ethical foundation and Christian love is another foundation. Parsifal noticed a wound and it hurt him and he wanted to fight the cause of this pain. Parsifal couldn't be prompted by love to combat evil as Christ did, because he is ignorant. If he knew as much as every person who lived among people knows, he would act not only out of compassion, but also out of love. Christ is all-knowing; He fought only out of love for the people. Compassion is only a part of love; love is not only prepared for compassion, but it gives other goods as well: it leads one on the right track, advises, helps, etc. Parsifal and Christ are extremes; an ordinary noble man is between the two. He is an altruist and works altruistically on the foundations of compassion and love (...).

Vienna, 24 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Spirit and matter, nature and social sciences – contrast or harmony?

Yesterday I studied Latin, today nothing at all. For the sake of Marijanović, I went again to the University this morning, and after that I visited the Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum. (Yesterday I was in the Kunsthistorisches). I looked at a number of exhibits, until I became dizzy. I was particularly interested in ore and its colors. Regrettably, I don't understand much about the other things there. When I saw these creations of nature, strange thoughts occurred to me. It is only now that I fully understand Bazarov.¹⁵⁹ Nature is so great, such beauty and laws that one must study it. According to Bazarov, poetry, love, faith, friendship, even God himself is all mere sentimentality ("the sweet taste of honey"). Why bother with things that "do not exist"? To speak about love, justice, honor – "this does not exist". Poetry, music, it is all "a stupidity". According to Bazarov, we ought to occupy ourselves with what is, what exists, take the frogs and vivisect them, construct electrical machines, build large ploughs, study medicine and occupy ourselves with what is certain and irrefutable. Nature is not a temple, but a workshop, and man is a worker in it. Such thoughts pass through my head and want to stick with me, but of no avail. I see a beautiful picture, I stand and admire; I hear a good work, I am glad; I seek a friend, a woman, etc. I think of my parents; from the "natural science" point of view this love towards them is also sentimentality. I already see myself in a grave, because I've had enough of life which doesn't tally with my "principles". These "principles" deny everything philosophical – aristocratism, authority, liberalism... They are "unnecessary" for Croatian people... I deny and watch as my mom and dad, already old, come to my grave and cry. When I only think of this, I feel that indeed there is something else which is not mere matter, that the world of the spirit is truly here. I thank the Almighty for having permitted me to live through all this, so that along with my one-sided views of art and the humanities I have come to love the natural sciences as well.

Yesterday in bed a physical thought came to me: to construe a machine which writes when one speaks. It is based on the telephone without wires or on microphones adapted to each particular voice.

I visited Puljić. Today is name-day. My brothers from the "Croatia" Society were telling dirty anecdotes here too.

¹⁵⁹ I. S. Bazarov is a character from Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Children* published in [1862](#). The main theme of with work is nihilism in the Russian Empire, embodied in the character of Yevgeny Vasilich Bazarov, a young scientist and nihilist, critical of traditional values, a man who spends his time reading natural science books and carrying out experiments.

Vienna, 25 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Going to a concert after church

Today also I didn't study as much as I wanted to. I got up late, went to the Augustinian Church. There I saw Canova's *Mary Christine*.¹⁶⁰ One priest preached about the Trinity. (...) The singing was rather good. In the afternoon, I did some Latin, then went to the concert hall. They played the

*Eroica*¹⁶¹, something by Mozart, Grieg and Wagner. *Eroica* is magnificent; I particularly liked the second movement – *Marche funebre* – and the third with its gaiety. I had dinner at the Mittlers. They tell me their mom is ill... Tomorrow the work starts, with God's help.

While walking, he sings to the Creator of nature, then reads Dostoevsky

My soul is always singing. I was in a park near the *Rathaus*. Wonderful moonlight, beautiful moonlit clouds, the murmur of the white fountain, black water with a silvery reflection of lamps, the enchanting smell of flowers. I will not sing any more, to admire the Genius who created it all, who gave...

More work is necessary. I got up at 7, went to lectures by Becker and Wurzbach, studied Latin a bit, and continued reading *Crime and Punishment*. I perceive Dostoevsky's genius more and more each day; to capture those psychological moments as he did is directly superhuman.

Vienna, 27 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Impressions and criticisms of Becker's lecture, visit to the theatre

Today I did some more, but not enough. I got up at 6.30, took a walk in *Rathauspark* and went to the lecture. Becker spoke about Rousseau, his *Heloïse* and others. He was telling us how his religious ideas were too revolutionary for his time, while today they are reactionary. Sounds a bit odd. He is a present-day, modern man, and what was before is not modern but reactionary. Becker's grandson will say that Becker's views were reactionary. And so, people will always convince themselves that their era is the one of perfect views... I wonder that Becker – a great scientist – didn't grasp the eternal in poetry, that which in spite of all the changes always remains true and beautiful.

Having said the above, I didn't say anything about Becker. Indeed, I like him a lot; he lectures in an interesting manner. Wurzbach spoke about Ragnard and other comedians and devoted a lot of time to Lesage's *Turcaret*. He has his drawbacks, but it is nice of him that when he mentions one work he enumerates the other ones who have the same motif or idea.

In the afternoon, I studied Latin, read *Crime and Punishment* and went with Mrs. Mittler to Raimund's theatre. We sat in the first row. Anzerguber's work *Die Kreuzelschreiber* was on the program. It has no deeper literary value. (...)

(Here he gives a brief description of this comedy)

Vienna, 29 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Lecture at the University, visit to the opera

Becker spoke about Chateaubriand. He admits he doesn't understand him. Of course, because Chateaubriand was a convinced Catholic. Becker does not deny his

¹⁶⁰ A pyramidal tombstone for Mary Christine the Austrian (1798–1805) in the Augustinian Church in Vienna. Made by the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova.

¹⁶¹ Beethoven's Symphony No. 3.

genius, but criticizes him as well. I went again to the University because of Marijanović. The dean doesn't believe that the Latin exam is equivalent to the high school graduation exam. I did a little bit of Latin.

In the evening, I was in the *Volksoper* to hear Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. A rather nice comical opera.

(Here follows a brief account of the content and critical analysis of the opera)



Opera house in Vienna which Merz often visited.

Vienna, 30 April 1915 – (18 years and 4 months)

Criticizes Professor Becker because of Chateaubriand

Becker continued lecturing about Chateaubriand. Between the lines, he said that the Holy Scripture does not tally with science; those 7 days in which God created the world Chateaubriand takes literally and says that God could have created rocks looking millions of years old. Chateaubriand is not a theologian and Becker holds that religion has no substance when challenged by science.

More about lectures at the University

I paid my rent. Not much money is left for this month. I did some Latin and read *Crime and Punishment*. I went to Jeruzalem's lecture. He spoke interestingly about the notion of universal education: what did the Romans demand of a universally educated man, the Greeks, the knights, and what do we demand today. It would be interesting to extract from this topic that which is unchangeable – eternal. I spoke with Filipović. I like him because of his enthusiasm for journalism.

We – the romantics – as long as we believe in God, shall be enthusiastic and happy. We mustn't be cold rational people who analyze with their tweezers all of the most tender feelings and thus destroy them.

(Here follow the verses in German which illustrate the above paragraph)

Vienna, 7 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Impressions about theatre performances

I went to Becker's lecture today, also to Wurzbach's and one juridical. The last one wasn't interesting in the least.

In the evening, I was in the Burg. They were giving Goethe's *Die Launen eines Verliebten* and Molière's *Malade imaginaire*. The first of the two is a beautiful pastoral

game. (...) *Malade imaginaire* is the best piece I saw on stage in my whole life. Molière's genius is visible in every scene, in every speech. (...)

Vienna, 9 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Wonderful moments in nature with the Jesuit Miroslav Vanino

All the joy I felt today is indescribable. My heart is overflowing with emotion; it wants to sing songs and anthems to the Creator.

I visited the Franks, and had lunch at the Mittlers. Tereza is going to my parents in Banja Luka. She stuffed my pockets with chocolate. She is a good girl; I do not deserve all this goodness.

I spent the afternoon with Vanino¹⁶² in beautiful nature. We enjoyed the air, the grass, the clouds, the flowers, everything surrounding us. We lay on the grass and drank as much as we could of the beauties of nature being born. I liked Vanino very much when he said yesterday in the "Croatia" Society that every little flower is a source of joy. I truly liked him. Today I could convince myself that he enjoys the beauties of nature and that he is doing his best to cultivate a merry soul. It is a nice thought – we must always be joyful; only joy creates enthusiasm, and this, in turn, great works and blind perseverance.

Wonderful, more than wonderful is this Viennese nature.

Vienna, 17 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Inner crises and vacillations, cross-examination of his world view

My life is a big question mark. From day to day I am losing my childhood faith. I lack my previous distinction between good and evil. I ask myself whether all that I considered good is actually good. What is truly good, does it exist at all? All these world views, aren't they merely a prejudice? And so, I go on living and questioning myself. At times, I seem to believe only what I see in front of me. This is what I see: I walk in a park in the evening and I see one pair on every bench, squeezing against each other, laughing happily, kissing... Factually this law of nature exists, the law of love (I now use the word love in terms of sensual drive of a man towards a woman). I don't look upon these pairs with my previous eyes. There was a time when I thought of it as mere passion, a weakness, a lack of character which yields to the pleasure of the senses. But I cannot any more look upon this basic law of nature in the same way, although I know that at the time when I had a closer look at this life (Military Academy) I was disgusted with this filth and mud.

Proof that God exists, the necessity of prayer, feeling of justice

For the justification of this principle I must ask myself whether God exists or not. Then, what do I mean by the word God? It is a fact that He exists, that I feel him around me, within me, here, there, everywhere. His melodies uphold and fill the universe. Every human feels the breath of something greater and more eternal ...Therefore, God exists. After that, I ask myself what is this God, what is his substance? Can we pray to him? Is he personal? Our inner being provides the answers to these questions in simple ways. If I insult my parents, I am terribly sorry. This is the proof that the feeling of committed injustice is not a prejudice, but that justice exists in us. Justice is a principle which lives in us and all our inner being becomes upset if we work against this principle. And the One whom we feel around us, of whom the reason tells us that he is eternal, towards whom the soul is inadvertently inclined, He will prove to be justice itself. In this way, we arrive at a

¹⁶² Miroslav VANINO, Croatian Jesuit (1879–1965), historian. By his intervention, Ivan Merz was able to study for two years in Paris, from 1920 until 1922.

personal God. He exists, and I firmly believe, even in the worst moments of temptation and doubt, that He is the only, eternal, great God.

The death of our dear ones leads us to recognize the purpose of our life

Now, having established that He exists, it follows that our life has a purpose. Then, we ought to think of something that people don't think of and what could easily lead us to real knowledge – namely, that we are all going to die. We love somebody enormously and this person dies. We shall never, ever see him or her again. We are full of thoughts, doubts, strivings, opinions, our whole intellectual universe, our "I" is a center around which everything turns, which receives and sorts the impressions; we live through all this, sometimes with pain and suffering (however, this is proof that justice is not a prejudice, because if somebody is the cause of our suffering, we fight against this person factually), and now, all at once, we die. What was the purpose of all this? Why so many thoughts and strivings when all is in vain, when it vanishes into nothing, when the soul is not an independent element enclosed in a bottle like the ghost in *Diable boiteux*¹⁶³. But, that cannot be! When everything in nature is so perfectly arranged, the eternity of our lives must also be in terms of justice. And it is truly so, and I believe in it and at moments when I feel this with my childhood faith, when I abhor evil and melt in prayer, at the bottom of my soul there is still that doubt, that great question mark of the last Adam. Why? What? And again, alongside all these doubts, I believe.

Faith must spur one into action, either Catholic or nothing

However, it does not suffice only to believe. Our faith must be a system, a signpost of life so that we do not act against the principle of justice and eternity. Religions provide the systems. And I say: *Aut catholicus aut nihil*¹⁶⁴. In this respect, I never had the tiniest doubt. I know and feel that Catholicism is the only true religion (if religion exists at all). I never thought about other religions that they might be better than the Catholic one. Here, I am Catholic in my soul. But that *primeval man*¹⁶⁵ in me, that Faust which doesn't recognize upbringing or prejudices, pulls me downwards and makes me doubt everything.

Dilemmas, doubts, self-criticism, struggle for the moral good

But, enough of that. I should criticize my own life. As my pure belief in Catholicism has declined, every other kind of enthusiasm has declined too, as well as every sharp judgement on the things going on around me. This I plainly see, not knowing whether it is good or not. The world loves and embraces – well let them love and embrace each other. One guy slapped me on the face. Never mind, let him slap me again. How many people are poor, how many people are at each other's throats. Let it be, as long as it doesn't touch my skin. Factually, although my reason tells me this is not a right line of thinking, due to these inner doubts I experienced this attitude.

And now it is high time to shake this off and to consider that Somebody for the sake of Truth died for me on the cross. Having pulled myself together I see that these girls in the park, these men and beautiful forms are only dirty passion, that these are not people with strivings and pains, but simple beasts which do not differ from others. And I mustn't justify such behavior because I know that the principle of a man's leaning towards a woman is only here for the sake of our soul, because our soul is the principle which perfects itself and rises. This negative principle of beauty, this forbidden tree of Paradise is here with its beauty only to make people out of us. And I will try to break through the temptation, not to look at a woman as a beautiful body, and I must not be attracted to her by her appearance. I will subjugate these tendencies and in her I will only seek what is

¹⁶³ *Diable boiteux* (*Devil in a Bottle*), a novel by D'[Alain-René Lesage](#), published in [1707](#).

¹⁶⁴ Latin: Either Catholic or nothing.

¹⁶⁵ German: Urmensch

eternal. And really, I now feel again that I do believe, that I believe in a Catholic manner, that the Mother of God is not Venus, and that I am truly happy to be on the right track again. And observing life, I will know what is noble and what is not, what is moral and what isn't.

All human strivings are really wandering around Catholicism

In this way I did an analysis of the senses, and if I had only kept to the sacred sentence "you will know the tree by its fruits" I would have arrived by means of reason, science, art, and most of all history to the result that there exists a certain truth, that it weaves its way through the entire history and that all human strivings and delusions are actually a wandering around Catholicism and that there are very few who truly experience it. Alongside everything that I believe, I am a man and a doubt lingers at the bottom of the soul and it strengthens me, because it enflames a spiritual struggle which as a man I am going through.

Vienna, 19 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Attitude towards a woman and her body, commends the veiling of women among the Muslims

The veiling of women among the Muslims is a brilliant regulation. It must have a very deep reason, because it has survived for so long. A woman must be hidden unless she wants to lead a man to a sinful thought. Looking always at bodily forms we forget the spiritual. Inadvertently, a man is always looking at a woman. For this reason, we must fight the temptation and look at her in the same way we are looking at a man; we must come to the point that we do not see a woman with a body in front of us, but a woman with her spiritual capabilities. It takes a lot of effort and struggle until a man reaches this elevated standpoint.

Vienna, 20 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Italian military pretensions on Dalmatia, prays to our Lady for help

We are at war with Italy. It is about our blood. The Italians want Dalmatia, Trieste, Rijeka and South Tyrol. It is a historical process; but our skin is at stake. I will try to rise above the passions and observe this in a cold manner. The only thing that remains is the prayer to the Eternal Mother to give us the strength to suppress the egotistical strivings of the Italians.

Vienna, 21 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Review of Wagner's opera Tannhäuser, actuality of its message

I just came home from Tannhäuser.¹⁶⁶ I cannot recollect all the impressions at once. It will take time to sort them all out. (...)

Tannhäuser is a type of man, I could say Faust. He always moves between two extremes: sensual love and the eternal-female. Both are in his essence. He is enthusiastic for one of the two at one moment, and for the other the next. But, he has a true human nature. In the embraces of Venus – sensuality – he doesn't find pleasure. He pulls away from her and goes to fight...

Tannhäuser is dialectical; he is a man. He does not observe love one-sidedly. His spirit strives toward the eternal-female, for Elisabeth, but he is enraptured by reality. He loves a woman as a man does; his love is intermingled with sensual pleasure. This is the

¹⁶⁶ *Tannhäuser*, the fifth opera by Richard Wagner, written in 1842.

tragedy of man; he dives into the deepest depths, and from those depths he strives upwards, even up to Mary. These two principles fight each other and the spiritual principle, the eternal one, overcomes the beautiful world of nature and passion. God triumphs. Elisabeth's eternal-female love destroyed Venus (she prayed for Tannhäuser, placing her visible life for him at the altar and redeeming him).

In Tannhäuser Wagner gave us a universal human struggle: the struggle between the sexes, the struggle that we experience from day to day, the struggle which always raises and perfects us. And Elisabeth has won, this is what he showed us, where a man ought to aspire to, if he wants to be a man.

(The parts in which the content of the opera is described are left out.)

Vienna, 22 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Meeting colleagues from the "Croatia" Society and discussion about war

I didn't do anything today. I rested. My eyes ache and I cannot read as I would like to. This evening I was in the "Croatia" Society, and after that Kuvačić, Buconjić, Strauch, Petrović and I went to a coffee room (corner of Liechtenstein Street). The conversation was gloomy; we spoke about Italy and her arrogance. She wants to tear apart our homeland. We spoke also about love, God, etc. It is hard to talk about these matters.

Inner struggles, moral doubts and vacillations

I spent the whole day thinking why we are in this world, why God thrust our noble soul into this disgusting animal body. I know it all and I struggle and insult the Madonna, I insult the world, and again I fight. The notion of ideal love, the ideal of a girl sinks into the abyss as I look at reality around me; the baseness and shallowness of this world which looks only at appearances, these women with transparent stockings, tight skirts so that every shape can be seen and evoke animal feelings. The notion of the ideal is regrettably only a notion; I don't find it in the world which now surrounds me. Oh, this doubt, the damned doubt! Why should purity be good? Isn't it a prejudice? What, in reality is that "good" that we talk about so much. These are the doubts, but in spite of it all, I feel inside my sanctuary – my heart – that I will always preserve and feel the spark of something untouchable, invisible, unthinkable, Great.

I had a long conversation with Buconjić (until 00.30 hours. Now it is 01.30) about God and similar matters. He is not in the clear whether a man arrives at the notion of God by himself... He also asks himself, he doubts – he's a man.

Vienna, 23 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Talks with colleagues about doubts and inner struggles

I was in church. I had lunch at the Mittlers, and in the afternoon, I took a walk with Kuvačić, Puljić and Lasić on a stretch from Mänwaldeg to Hutteldorf. We spoke about the role of monarchy in history. Kuvačić holds that monarchy was always a carrier of great ideas: the Turks, Napoleon, etc. After that, we declared our feelings regarding God and spoke about our doubts and inner struggles. Kuvačić, as I could see, is passing through a particularly difficult inner ordeal. He is a priest, must believe in a lot of things, but he is fighting. As I could notice, he was once in love... He always thinks about the world, relation of God toward the world and others. I insulted Puljić a little bit: I focused on his flaw of patronizing coffee rooms. He didn't take it seriously.

Vienna, 25 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Struggle against passions, feels the existence of the supernatural, prays for his eyes

I don't have much to write about, because I didn't do a thing. Yesterday the whole day I was tormented by terrible passion, it forced me to run and battle with it. It defiles my ideals and pulls me into the mud... Where is my purity, moral, intellectual? Sometimes I am almost a disgrace to myself.

In the evening, I am always full of brilliant thoughts, noble intentions; I sense directly something supernatural, I can feel its existence. When the day breaks, all the beautiful decisions are forgotten, all the environment, all that is visible grabs my attention and I begin to act instinctively – rather evil in fact.

I spent the afternoon with Vlaho. He read to me his poems, and the best among them are those bursting with passion. He is very talented and can use his strengths nicely. Tomorrow I will start again with normal work. I find it hard to read for long because my eyes start aching, and I don't discern the letters.

My prayers go to the Almighty and St. Anthony to have mercy on me and improve my sight, just so that I may read and work as much as my heart is longing for. There are many, truly many things I must still find out. There are modern, educated enemies on all sides, and one should fight with them with deep means.

God, I will use my eyes only for looking at the beautiful and for elevated purposes; therefore, help me, please!

Vienna, 26 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

War destinies of his colleagues, complaining about his eyes

Ante is still not on the battlefield. This evening I met Novković. He told me that Kratena and Pavlović were wounded. Đukić was killed. Novković, poor man, got a reprieve. He has rheumatism, hardly moves his hands, suffers from headache, etc. He also suffers from some heart disease. The cause of all of this is poverty. In high school, he lived in a damp apartment, etc. Looking at people in such a condition, one must thank God for being healthy.

I studied Latin a little bit. In the afternoon, I fell asleep. Eyes, oh my poor eyes. If only I could see well, I think I would be a much better man.

Vienna, 27 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

On lectures at the University

Today I attended lectures by Becker, Brecht, Eisler, Fournier. The first of them spoke about Hugo, the second brilliantly analyzed *Herodos* and *Marianne*, the third spoke about Palamedes, Nirefeld, Vermeer and Fabriems. He compared the last one with Rembrandt. Fournier spoke about politics in the Monarchy between 1875 and 1878 and the motives for occupying Bosnia.

I studied Latin a bit. Eyes, my poor eyes. I see that my world view is again getting deeper; I suppressed the animal drives so strongly that I have almost forgotten them. The ideal of a woman is again developing more clearly.

My possessions are 20 crowns and one voucher for the canteen.

*Gaudeamus igitur juvenes dum sumus...*¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ *Gaudeamus...* A students' anthem in some countries (*Let us rejoice while we are young...*)

Vienna, 29 May 1915 – (18 years and 5 months)

Art in churches

Kuliš was here. He spoke about hieratic art in Emmaus. The Benedictines and their pupils march steadily like in *Parsifal*. They sing the divine office. Women do the same. He told me that it is very touching. Then he spoke about the Beuron paintings: there are many. But, better ones are in St. Gabriel. A true church art, says he. In other churches, there are also many beautiful paintings, but the execution and style is too profane.

I studied Latin, went to a meeting in the “Croatia” Society and started reading Plautus’s *Bramarbas*.

(Here follows a brief description of the content and analysis of the technical execution of this work which he compares with Shakespeare)



University in Vienna at the time when Ivan Merz studied there.

Vienna, 2 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Reads the Luč Magazine and parts with colleagues who are going into the army

That’s how it is. I cannot go to Ante, but I’m going to Pilsen. I leafed through the *Luč Magazine*. The best of all are notes from Eckert’s diary and the obituary for Tieck... I will come back to this some other time. This evening many of my companions are going to the army. I never thought I would feel so sorry for them. Špiro, Buconjić, Petrović, Mujagić, Rebić and others.

Vienna, 7 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Return from Pilsen, analysis of a love feeling

This morning I came back from Pilsen. I was there from Thursday morning until Sunday evening (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th of June). The result is that I am, it seems to me, in love with Rosl. Perhaps I ought to analyze my feelings and try to extract the essence of love. First of all, I ask myself: is love sinful? A difficult question. Earlier I thought that love is that same feeling which exists between a brother and a sister. But, it is not so. What else could it then be? It is some strange feeling which draws us to a female being, without asking our reasoning part whether this being possesses the spiritual beauty about which we have dreamt so much. If that is so, let’s hear what Bazarov says: love is a physiological process... According to this, our relationship is purely animal: an instinct that draws a man towards a woman. This is what I had thought before, but I cannot think the same way now. A man is not an animal – this is my principle, but still I feel an affinity, a love

towards the girl and in the midst of these feelings my mind is clear as crystal. Admittedly, this inner feeling has a bodily background. I like her because she has a beautiful face, as well as body. But the beauty of a face, or rather the expression in the eyes, creates empathy in us, it is the expression of the inner being. The passage from this spiritual relationship to a purely animal one is not great: if our bodies just touch, even unintentionally electricity passes through us... Maybe this is due to imperfection. Even when our bodies touch we should remain impassive. "We must be as one of these little ones."

Maybe I now understand love, a woman, as the center of culture of all the ages. This spiritual relationship created great works; it is in God's plan. Of course, the poets held that love is sensual pleasure, the tingling that passes through a man; but here they were mistaken. What gives magic to their poetry is the spiritual, the eternal which they worshipped, as a matter of fact, the eternal which passes through the sensual pleasure. They thought that this is love, whereas love is the invisible, the incomprehensible. . .

Visit to family in Pilsen and related impressions

In Pilsen¹⁶⁸ I rode in a car, saw the Morsers (35 centimeter cannon), visited my grandmother's grave. I once visited Rosl, brought her here on Saturday from the Chotieschau convent. The convent had a positive influence on her spiritual life, she is a good Christian. But I know, the moment she leaves the convent, it will all vanish. It is easy for her to speak about Christian values in a convent. When she comes into the world and meets the barriers, she will succumb. One ought to fight bloody battles in order not to sink beneath the surface in the ordinary world.

She speaks good French, plays the piano and violin. She doesn't have a deep intellect, but possesses a feeling for beauty. She is eager to learn, she would like to study music. I like her very much. When she held me by the arm, when we looked at the pictures together and finally when she gave me a farewell kiss, these were all beautiful moments for me. But, she doesn't know my true feelings, and she loves me; of what avail is this for me, when this is not love!

Uncle Heinrich is a good man, helps everyone. He arrived at an influential post because he never contradicted anybody. This is not nice... I like him very much. Hedviga is also very good; she likes to boast a little bit, but she did whatever she could for me. Karl is a tramp. His daughters are cheerful. At the farewell, they got kisses. They were pleased. Tutz is rather introverted, but he doesn't learn.

The Chotieschau convent is marvelous. The nuns are all spiritual beauties: the countess Kleist, the duchess Lobkowitz, a painter, an artist on the piano and violin, and there are others too. And all are so humble and dutiful.

Rosl has no altruistic upbringing. Too bad.

Vienna, 9 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Listened to Mozart's opera "The Abduction from Seraglio"

Today I had my hair cut very short. It is a major event in my life. Good thing that mom doesn't know it. I studied a bit of Latin. It is hard to study on such a hot day. I went for a swim.

I was in the Opera House to hear Mozart's opera *The Abduction from Seraglio*. At first it gave the impression of being a comical opera, but, like in Shakespeare, the comical

¹⁶⁸ Ivan Merz's father was from Pilsen by birth. He had two more brothers there who had families and whom Ivan visited on this occasion.

scenes are mixed with serious ones and it gives the impression of an opera in the end. Admittedly, for our modern taste, the terribly long recitals and duets are a bit boring.

(Here follows a critical account of the technical execution of the opera and its brief contents)



Interior of the Opera house in Vienna

Thoughts about love after listening to Mozart's opera

Looking at two persons kissing in a work of art, it seems natural. We do not analyze this further, as if it is supposed to be so. What, after all, is love? Why does love between a man and a woman exist? Isn't love a utopia? Or maybe it was human nature with its propensity to beautify everything which turned an ordinary passion into love? When I observe myself, I wonder and ask myself whether this love of mine is an illusion, does it have to be that way? I seem funny to myself if I declare that I am in love, that I feel attracted to another being. Love should be studied in poets, first of all in Shakespeare because he is hugely serious: Hamlet! At least his *Ophelia and Hamlet* made the deepest impression on me of all the theatre pieces I have seen so far (Zagreb!). Following that, love should be studied in philosophers and finally in people (the so-called good and evil, because who will convince me that good or evil is not a prejudice?) and finally in oneself.

Vienna, 10 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Studies Latin, reads Lesage's novels

Again, I worked relatively little. After all, I cannot learn Latin by myself when no one is showing me anything. I will try to go to Jurenka tomorrow to ask him for his opinion. I would love to know Latin well... this is necessary for knowing literature, although the majority, Ovid and others, have very little poetry in themselves.

I read Lesage's *Diable boiteux*. A rather realistic account, though all the power is concentrated on the exterior. It is vividly written. One recognizes the influence of the night (bottle with a devil) and picaresque novels.¹⁶⁹ The influence of the classics is great (the devil's cloak is made like Achilles's shield).

¹⁶⁹ Picaresque novel (*romanzo picaresco* from Spanish *picaro* – a nincompoop) is an illusionary autobiography, written in the first person in which a fictitious person narrates his adventures from childhood until mature age.

Desire for serious work in the Croatian Catholic Movement

Here is the root of my dissatisfaction. All my literary work has come to a halt: I don't read, I have no topic which I study. A man must have something higher to hold on to, to what he will dedicate his strivings, what will excite him. I would love to work for our Movement¹⁷⁰ in the literary field; to bring to our attention foreign literature, to educate our taste and instill love toward other arts.

Vienna, 11 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Desire for creation

I have this immense desire to create. I've had enough of learning; I would like to turn my spiritual life into poetry. It deserves it, because it would be something deep, encompassing universal issues of mankind. I think I ought to have some content as a framework for all my thoughts. One ought to study *Grabancijaš Dijak*.¹⁷¹

I read further the *Diabla boiteaux*. I must laugh seeing how everything is artificially made up, fabricated, e.g. the story of Belfort's love.

(Here follows a short account of the content of this work)

Vienna, 12 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Always asks himself for the cause of everything, approaching the issue of love in an objective manner

I see that I have reached a rather high level. I observe life and ask myself always for the cause of everything, for that which sets everything in motion. The problem of love is particularly interesting. My view of women is rather elevated too; my passion has grown almost silent, and I observe everything objectively, in cold blood.

An act of love towards a Muslim soldier

I did some Latin. Today, Prinz lectured instead of Jurenka. I had dinner in Prater, met König and after that joined a Bosnian soldier (Muhamed Lišić from Sarajevo). I took him to the steep railway and to the Riesenrad (the panoramic wheel). When he was up, he said: "I would give a thousand crowns if my mother, then the sister, then the father were here to see what I see." He told me how he would love to receive me at his home: he would kill a ram and wouldn't let me leave his house for eight days, his mother would embrace me, etc. A very simple man, illiterate, but so good-hearted, and he says this of himself too. The adventure cost me 240 crowns, but I don't mind; who knows, he might be killed soon; he was once in the war and was wounded. When I asked him if he was afraid before going to the front line, he told me he wasn't, because it is predetermined when a man is going to die: you might sit at your coffee table or be at war.

Vienna, 14 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Lacking capacity for a deeper intellectual work

I only worked and worked, with little thought. I am mainly in a good mood, without any deeper foundations. Laughter and cheerfulness, light jokes, occasionally a worse one. I find it hard to find content and observe everything in a deeper way. Generally, lack of capacity for a deeper intellectual work. I fancy having some hidden poetic trait which

¹⁷⁰ Croatian Catholic Movement was founded in 1903 the bishop of Krk A. Mahnić and Merz was a member.

¹⁷¹ Full title: Matijaš grabancijaš dijak, Croatian comedy from 1804

would surface if I found a good content (especially from folk literature: *Grabancijaš dijak*).

Correspondence with Dr. Ljubomir Maraković

Ivan was undergoing a deep inner crisis in the spring of 1915, about which he left us copious notes from this period in his Diary, but also in the letters which he wrote to close friends. Dr. Maraković found out indirectly about this crisis and sent him a long letter of encouragement and spiritual assistance on 6 June 1915. Merz responded to this letter after ten days with a letter which we publish here almost in its entirety. Only the irrelevant parts are left out. The letter is dated 15/16 June 1915. In it one can see on the one hand the full drama of the inner crisis which Merz managed to overcome, and on the other a great sincerity and trust towards his former teacher who was his guide and educator not only in literary but also spiritual matters. This letter, due to its very intimate character wonderfully complements the picture of his emotional and intellectual state which he tried to convey through the entries in the Diary.

Vienna, 15/16 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Dear professor!

“Clouds are covering the sky; it rains without end. I don’t know what is emerging in me, I don’t know His intentions. After a lightning, darkness falls upon the eyes and the heart searches for the path to which nightly sounds are calling it. Light! O, where is the light? I burn with longing for a burning flame. Thunder, wind wailing through the emptiness. A dark night, black as a pitch. Let not the hours pass in this darkness. Go, light the torch of Love with your Life.” (*Gitanjali*)

I think that every man goes through this sometimes. Terrible doubts are set to destroy the whole edifice of the spiritual world which one has built with such an enormous effort. Luckily, this terrible storm has passed and the sun is shining more brightly than ever. Only now I can take satisfaction in the fact that my whole ideology is not copied from others, but I built it myself through bloody battles. I know that inner ordeals are not over yet, but I am resisting all outer and inner evil influences because I believe that my inner ordeals will only lead to something better.

You guessed rightly when you said that Kučinić didn’t fully understand my letter. It was only a glimpse from my spiritual life at that time and I expounded the doubts I was struggling against. I am still not completely in the clear regarding the things I wrote to him; namely, I was rather preoccupied, even tortured, with the issue of love (ordinary!). When I say this I always think of Bazarov and ask myself whether it is a mere physiological process. Reason tells me it is not so, because it proceeds from history, literature and especially from folk art (*Niebelungen Lied*) that the only real love is something spiritual. But this is clear only on paper, I haven’t integrated it in me as yet, as I did many other things. This is how I choose to portray love: the soul of a man is in one sense incomplete, and in another more complete than a female soul. A man, namely, lacks the Eternal-female, and a woman lacks the self-conscious, the militant that is in man, something we could call the Eternal-male! Due to this incompleteness, they long for each other and this longing is love. It is interesting that there are a lot of poets (especially Musset) who lived in an entirely immoral way (especially with Miss Sand), and nevertheless gave us magnificent love poems. It seemed to these poets that in this sensual feeling, love is mixed with something spiritual; their poems are great because they reflect only the things of the soul, the eternal. Observing myself, I see that there is something true

here; in love one feels something similar, and Goethe's words *the Eternal-female draws us to itself*¹⁷² come to life every day.

After this introduction, I unburdened myself and I can thank you for your dear letter. There are a number of things in it which comfort me and intrigue me. Namely, I was glad to see that regarding the view on masterpieces I came to the same result as you did. Actually, this was not my own achievement, but I took Ruskin and these words opened new vistas in art: "Many of the greatest paintings that we have are mysterious, others are a beautiful toy, the third a dangerous means of enjoyment. In the dearest ones, we often find weaknesses, and in the greatest ones we often find guilt."

Until now, namely, I never even thought that many of the paintings of a Raphael, Tintoretto, Da Vinci and others, along with their perfection are also full of sin. Actually, Raphael's deepest work *Sistine* is not so good in itself – although it is more perfect – as Rosetti's simple *Beata Beatrix*. This is so not only in painting, but other arts as well and I came to the conclusion that Raphael is not the apex of religious art, but that one day an artist will be born who will possess the artistic capabilities of Raphael, but he will also be holy – a saint in fact – who will know what it means to converse with God, to seek the ecstasy and to immerse himself in it in chosen moments. An artist must be a higher type of being, a chosen one...

I kindly thank you for your advice regarding books. Ruskin – as you could read – I already perused. (...) A week ago, in Pilsen I was visiting my uncle. He showed me an enormous cannon and other war machines. The workers sweating in heat create these huge cannons; they use and kill their own powers for nothing. When I was touring the various factories, I thought how good ploughs could be made from this material. (...)

Now that I have touched upon such a romantic matter, I mustn't miss the opportunity to infuriate the philistines. Namely, there are so-called Catholics who not only ignore dance, but also theatre and the fine arts. For them "scientific work" is everything; other things are a stupidity. They infuriate me more than our obvious enemies; they are lethal for us and I maintain that they are one of the causes why a cultured non-Catholic world doesn't understand us. They mock us on account of them, saying that we are backward, lack the sense of beauty and they say that we are always gloomy, dissatisfied. Oh, if they only knew how much joy there is in us, how we enjoy "the melodies of His music", nature, virtue, Communion and other things, they would envy us. But these philistines among us are always gloomy; they believe in something without thinking, weaving along their philistine ways, criticizing the evil without understanding it, and surely without compassion.

It is night, midnight has passed long ago, the echo of some late pedestrian is heard through the window. These sounds are only heard for a while, then they die down. Silence, one only hears how the petroleum lamp draws the petroleum.

I've almost forgotten something! It's been a long time since they asked me to write some literary contribution for the war issue of *Luč* (...)

(Here Ivan writes about his paper on Turgenev, how he completed it, sent to the editors of Luč, but it wasn't published as it was too long, so he asked them to return it to him which they did.)

There is not much talk in Vienna about the war. Everybody wants peace and bread. Everything is very expensive. There are rumors that the crop will be good. I am more interested in the spiritual crop, will the humanity be at least partly regenerated by this war, will anything great emerge from all this spilled blood!? *(Here he quotes the French verses of the poet Verlaine from his poem Sagesse)*. My only desire is that after this war people sit "at the tables of yearning which are always full", as Novalis says in his *Anthem* and

¹⁷² German: das Ewig-weibliche zieht uns hinan

direct all their strivings in one direction, towards which mankind ought to strive. To an extent, we can have hope; I have seen many touching scenes already.

It is time for me to finish and go to bed; I could say much more, but we will leave it for another time, or rather, you know in advance what I mainly think. At least until now, whenever it concerns me, you were never wrong.

Many hearty greetings from

Hans

Vienna, 18 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Vienna – a frivolous city

I am mainly cheerful and in a good mood. Especially during the day. I like light. At night, I go out early. Evil thoughts pursue me like furies; namely, Vienna is a terribly frivolous city. In the evening one can see – at least this is how I see – only the shallowness, mean, sinful looks.

Praises Dr. Lj. Maraković and his virtues

The day before yesterday I got a letter from Ljuba. It made me very happy. As I was reading it, it is as if I saw Ljuba in front of me: that dear person, always enthusiastic. We lack such people, people who believe in progress, who enjoy everything, who are enthusiastic about everything. He is not a cold scholarly analyst, but a man full of God, or at least he is striving to be.

The good, beautiful and true in art

His views on art are brilliant, although I still do not comprehend them fully. I know that the good, beautiful and true are in the metaphysical sense one – God. However, I see that Rodin is beautiful, but is not true, and regarding goodness he is indifferent. The other works are true but evil, some again are a combination of the beautiful and evil, etc. We ought to find some connection. True, we are speaking only about transient human works and our notions of beauty are very changeable. Due to this transience, these three things do not overlap. Therefore, we must be careful and seek in the transient beauty that which is eternal and these three eternal things will always and in practice be in harmony. Such is, to an extent, Raphael's *Madonna*: true, good and beautiful, although not as good as it would be if it were painted by a brush of an artist-saint.

Works by Rodin and Sinding with respect to truth, goodness and beauty

Rodin is beautiful, but, as Ljuba rightly says – he is a lie. When we say that he is beautiful, we must know that inside it there is also truth and goodness. Indeed, he has that. The bodily passion which Rodin has portrayed has also something spiritual in itself. It is not only an animal-to-animal relationship (*Kiss*), but the longing of a man towards a woman, real love. This is the true part inside it and therefore this work is good and beautiful to an extent. The beauty, however, exceeds the goodness: the work is not harmonious. A work of art must be an accord of truth, goodness and beauty. With this in view, I prefer Sinding. His *Kiss* was true (he didn't show passion, but longing), and that's why he is good. But he is not as beautiful as Rodin. Therefore, this also is not a work of art. Rodin is a greater man than Sinding, his technique is better (he creates beauty), than Sinding's goodness (truth); due to that individuality, for the moment Rodin has greater value.

In future generations, at a time when an artist will appear who will be greater than Rodin and better than Sinding, he will say: "I came to my own art studying Rodin and Sinding (or someone else). The latter steered my attention to an idea and I developed it by myself. I sought the truth and in my life with God I felt the urge to create. I created and I

cast these ideas into Rodin's forms. In God's eyes, Sinding has greater merit because he alerted me to the Idea, Eternity. Rodin was a man of this world: he studied only the exterior without thinking of the Eternal Will. He is a golden vessel – transient – into which I poured the Eternal idea.”

Impressions from a lecture about social problems

I studied Latin, went to a lecture by Daar Ude: *Why are we Catholics abstinent*. Caritas gives us the inspiration. Magnificent, he spoke in a poetic manner. He gave us statistics for idiots, morons, the weak, lunatics, prostitutes, suicidal persons, etc. He unveiled a terrible picture in front of us. It is true that alcohol is a greater enemy than others because it is an evil friend.

Vienna, 19 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Vices are the cause of the low moral condition of society

Contemporary man must by all means immerse himself into social thought. The issue of alcohol is surely one of the most important. It is hard to believe, but the numbers speak for themselves, they accuse. Daar Ude gave a brilliant lecture, especially regarding prostitution: “Masked dances and carnivals are derived from the walls of a brothel.” He is surely right. I highly respect a man who dares to stigmatize present-day conditions.

Vienna, 22 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Criticism of the politics of the Croatian parliament

Lvov is in our hands – Bravo! Rosl wrote to me. Croatian parliament is a pigsty. The Prefect and coalition partners behave as traitors. Now when the time is ripe to get free finances, they quarrel. The Prefect, as I have heard, said the following: “I am putting to your notice that the financial agreement is prolonged for one year.” To that, Hrvoje retorted: “Very comfortable.” He spoke from the soul of the entire Croatian people. An outrage; Croats are sacrificing their lives valiantly defending the Emperor, and they are rewarded with a new absolutism.

Vienna, 23 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Enthusiastic manifestations in Vienna after victory at Lvov

I just came from these huge manifestations. A lot of people gathered in front of and on the City Hall. Various societies, mainly scouts, marched singing the anthems. Then the Zionists with blue-white flags. Entire processions of Polish Jews were passing by, trying to sing something, but of little avail. High school pupils sang nicely, and a cry could be heard: “Long live the Ruthenian people” and others. Then the societies came together with soldiers. Hungarian military songs were sung. German officers were greeted with “*Heil!*”, and the “*Heil dir...wacht am Rhein*” was sung. Everyone was on the move, shouting triple “hooray”, waving the caps, hands, lanterns. A hugely elated crowd.

I liked Polish legionnaires best. They stood with torches on the cars and slowly drove through the crowd. They were jubilant, and the crowd waved with handkerchiefs from the steps of the City Hall. They sung in unison the Polish anthem. It's a fact that I am living in a historical time when it is evident that there is an idea, that it directs wars, wins or loses. The Habsburg idea is immensely strong in Vienna; intimately, I couldn't participate in all this gaiety. We, people from the South, do not share this unconditional trust in Austria, although we love her and without her Croatia would be unthinkable. Admittedly, Austria has a huge role in conciliating the nations, to kill national chauvinism.

There was one Croatian three-colored flag. Bosnian soldiers didn't take part, and I am sorry for that. I would love to hear "Long live" in Croatian in the center of Vienna.



The Vienna Town Hall

Love towards the parents – proof of the existence of the supernatural world

My dear parents congratulated me on my name-day. May the Almighty bless them! Whenever I doubt in the Highest, in Goodness and all the ideology of mine, love and loyalty towards my parents is something unshakeable; I feel it as something living, and it is a witness to me that love, soul, God is not a utopia, that all of this exists, that man is truly an idea striving towards its source. I should spend more time in nature.

Vienna, 24 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Name-day celebration, impressions from manifestations

My name-day passed nicely. I got a big cake from Tereza and other sweets. Similarly Puljić, and from Ivić I got a crucifix. This present I liked the best. The pardon of sins is connected with it. This is nice, he believes in it and he tried to support what is eternal in me, my religious feeling.

This morning there were enormous manifestations in front of the Schönbrun. The Emperor came out and others. I didn't see him quite well. The crowd was shouting like mad, waving the flags, hats. In the evening the City Hall was brilliantly lit. It evoked the image of something medieval. From the black walls the illuminated windows shone; it reminded me of the times of the strongest deistic idea, on the times full of hope and love for the Almighty. The illuminated windows were for me the expression of this gladness. The crowd and again the crowd. They waved, played music, sang, marched. Girls in white passed by waving flags, like waves on a sea, swaying, playing, and separating again, this is how these small flags were moving. As everybody shouted, so did I. Not from some deep feeling, though.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ This is the end of the 3rd notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 17 March 1915 until 24 June 1915.

Vienna, 26 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)¹⁷⁴

Preliminary exam in French literature

Yesterday at noon I decided to take a preliminary exam in 18th century French literature with Wurzbach. A rather extensive matter.

In the afternoon, I worked about six hours, and this morning around two. It was easy, because I had been attending the lectures. I went to the exam, and thank God he caught my Achilles' heel.

(Here follows a detailed account of the exam which went rather bad because he got 2 - the lowest passing mark)

It's good that he caught me. I really don't know history, and it is indispensable for the study of literature. Even for its own sake it is interesting.

At the first moment, I was desperate; not because of the mark, but because of the embarrassment in front of the professor. It's true, he pays too much attention to years, but they are necessary too. From now on, I will learn everything. The years strengthen the memory, and they are the basis of historical chronology. God help me! I didn't know Latin well because I didn't prepare myself due to the French preliminary exam.

Vienna, 28 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Michelangelo and Rodin – an impossible comparison

Becker finished his lectures today. He managed to mention Verlaine too. His lectures were good, I learned a lot. I studied Latin, and after that I read about Michelangelo. I must always admire these people from the Renaissance. It is not only the skill of the form, but their entire work possesses a deeper content: there is always an idea in the background. Michelangelo's art is not a sin like Rodin's, because he doesn't admire sensuality, but quite the contrary: the forms give rise to the "empire of thought" which plays the greatest role in people. When I think of Michelangelo, I see that he is magnificent and strong like Moses. His paintings also leave me with the impression of being grandiose painted sculptures (Sybil, Jeremias, Adam, God).

Vienna, 29 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

*Melancholic thoughts on a rainy day*¹⁷⁵

The rain is beating at the window panes. It is gloomy and sad and the rain beats and beats, now stronger, now weaker. In the soul, it is also gloomy, sad and my soul wants to cry, without knowing why. I love this rainy day more than a bright one, because the light which reveals so many things, prevents me from diving into my soul. The rain is pouring down without the intention of stopping. I dive into my soul; I search around, but I cannot find a thing. I would love to cry long and enjoy this crying while diving deeper and deeper until my crying would meet Him who is eternally sad. And I would sit at His feet and the rain would continue to pour, and I would eternally cry and listen to Him without a reason.

¹⁷⁴ This is the beginning of the 4th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 26 June 1915 until 28 October 1915.

¹⁷⁵ Ivan's first biographer, Dr. D. Kniewald, who knew him well personally, wrote that from the psychological point of view Merz was a mixture of a choleric and a melancholic. In this text the melancholic trait of his character comes to the surface, triggered by weather, a rainy day. On other occasions, he left us completely different, much more cheerful descriptions of his state of mind.

This period is sad. As if it were autumn; I have no desire to go out, but enjoy taking a book and plunging into the world of thought. This is the best period for a deep, pleasant work.

After these rainy days, Greta comes to my mind, I remember the beautiful moments when I sat in her room and we chatted...

Vienna, 30 June 1915 – (18 years and 6 months)

Problems with Latin, criticizes his attitude towards God

I am desperate. I've been studying Latin the whole day and put a lot of effort into it. Prinz asked me precisely those parts which I couldn't translate. Along with that, I failed at my written Latin exam. A tremendously bad omen: if I get a bad exam certificate with Prinz, I could easily fail at the graduation exam. Two years and more would be lost.

Along with that, I lost trust in my abilities. Others study Latin less than me, and factually know it better. I will try, with God's help, to study harder... It killed some kind of pride in me, a self-assurance or conceit, if I can call it that.

Yes, lately I have become somewhat arrogant and I tried playing with God. If I believe in him, why do I torture myself with doubts? As He is greater than us, we must trust Him blindly. Regrettably, people usually take Him as someone lower than us, someone we are allowed to test somehow... From now on, I will try to act differently.

What would my parents say if they knew my bad situation with Latin!? I am sorrier for them than for myself.

Vienna, 1 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Tries to correct his mistakes

Ante wrote from the battlefield. Dad is drawing closer these days. Great! I studied Latin for several hours this morning, and five more in the afternoon. Maybe even more. This is my entire worry and I will not think of my specific affairs, I will put aside thoughts of beauty and life's problems until I rectify my mistakes.

Vienna, 3 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Program for the summer vacation, prays to God and Mary that he might fulfill his mission in life

In Vienna, everything is going poorly. I just came from a preliminary exam in Latin. I passed with the lowest passing mark. True, I didn't know it very well, but factually I know it much better than others who got the mark "very good". Prinz is too much of a high school teacher; gives marks like in high school, etc., and will not make it easier for the student and give him a "very good". A favorable certificate makes a good impression and one likes to receive it. Otherwise, these preliminary exam certificates are of no use at all. But, from these failures I conclude: during the summer break, I will study grammar, as well as history and geography. I must learn Latin to the point of reading Livy easily. It will ruin my vacation, but I must.

I am also glad for having discovered my Achilles' heel. It is beyond doubt that there will be more. I also intend to learn French perfectly during future vacations (1916) so that I can thrust myself with full force into the study of esthetic sciences. My heart calls me to it; I myself wonder how come I disciplined myself for so long and didn't read any literary works. But I reached a conclusion: one must firstly create a basic, I repeat – basic foundation before applying oneself to one's favorite subject. Only then will one understand it in a comprehensive and deep manner.

God and the Virgin, you who are always so kind and pure, please, help this poor little worm who wants to fulfill his duty which is destined for him as a man!
I believe I am going home on Monday, the day after tomorrow.

Vienna, 4 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Conversation about topics of interest

I was in Prater with Šantić. We spoke about faith, love, the Prince Marko, etc. He spoke of Eichendorff and his poems. One ought to read them because they are full of intimacy, poetry, not aristocratic like the French.

Banja Luka, 19 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Acquaintance with the Polish Miss Dulka

I will spend a week at my home. I was sick in Vienna (tooth) and, as far as I can remember, I lived a rather intensive intellectual life; I prayed a lot. Yes, when one feels weak, when one admits his weaknesses, then one is at one's best. But, enough of that, it is already past. Now I am at my parents' place and I waste my time playing tennis and in the company of Miss Dulka.¹⁷⁶ She is a very pretty girl; I derive a special pleasure from the fact that she knows of spiritual life, battles, observations. Of course, there are a number of things in her which are not quite correct, but they will vanish perhaps. I was with her on Petrićevac¹⁷⁷ and she told me about the sisters from the convent where she was staying.

I would rather be the small deaf-mute Ćiro than what I really am, in order to be happy that I am not even worse off. One ought to strive towards such a simple soul... However, it is night time. Terrible thoughts come to my mind; but the day will come and all of this will vanish. An unsatisfied soul will sob. Light... light... Ivić¹⁷⁸ is here.



Banja Luka – Petrićevac. Church and Franciscan Monastery at the beginning of the 20th century. In this place, Pope John Paul II on 22 June 2003 proclaimed Ivan Merz a Blessed of the Catholic Church.

¹⁷⁶ Dulka, a Polish girl who was this year spending her vacation with her family (Polish immigrants to Bosnia)

¹⁷⁷ Petrićevac, the suburbs of Banja Luka where on 22nd June 2003 the Pope John Paul II came and declared Ivan Merz a Blessed of the Catholic Church.

¹⁷⁸ Fr Kazimir IVIĆ, a Franciscan, Ivan's colleague from the studies in Vienna, later director of the Franciscan high school in Visoko.

Banja Luka, 20 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Is a friar allowed to walk on the street with a girl?

This morning I again played tennis. In the afternoon, I took a walk with Ivić along the Vrbas River. Later we met Dulka and after walking together for a while, Ivić said that he doesn't want to walk in her company.

Was he right in saying so? I don't mean him as a person, but he can be a symbol for his order. There is a prejudice among the folk that a friar mustn't walk with a girl, and if he does so, he creates a scandal. This is a prejudice and we must fight against the prejudices. But, is this prejudice justified? The mission of the friars, namely, is not to be in the company of women. They have taken the vows of chastity, and their work is felt among the people. For this reason, it is good for the friars not to be in the company of women. But, to make this into a principle – as it is the prevailing view today – is an offence to women. This sends the message that she is something different than a man; this is only looking at her exterior, at her bodily role as a woman, an offence to her spirit which is human just like a man's. I don't blame Ivić because he did it in order not to cause a scandal.

There are times when I desire to be the deaf-mute Ćiro. But, these thoughts are bad, they are a sin. We must be happy that we are healthy. I notice that my spiritual life is becoming shallower and shallower. I am frequently with Dulka. But, the Grünwalds are always so childish that we never get a chance to talk about matters of a deeper spiritual value. By all means, Ante is already in the other world...

Banja Luka, Thursday, 22 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Life's crises, inner struggle, duties

Life is terrible. If I didn't have at the bottom of my soul the hope in faith and something eternal, I wouldn't like to live at all. But, I am not a coward; I want to overcome all obstacles. Maybe I have pangs of conscience for being out the whole day, and I have so much Latin matter to learn. Tomorrow, I know, I will not – just as today – learn a thing. And now I will lie down and pray to God. But, how to approach Him being as I am? I myself don't know. It is terrible. My life is abominable. But, nevertheless, I will work and try to earn some pleasure for myself.

Banja Luka, 29 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

The analysis of love, spiritual life of a woman, purpose of marriage

“Shall we ever be able to throw an anchor into the ocean of centuries, at least for a single day?”¹⁷⁹ This, I think, is a verse from Lamartine's poem *Lac*.

This whole week I enjoyed playing tennis and being in Dulka's company. No, my God, the times have passed when we spoke about love. Love doesn't exist as the world and literature paints it. One thing is the law of nature and its arousal the world calls love. Flirtation and the like, this is pure sensuality. I am far removed from that. There is something else, devoid of any bodily element and bodily inclination, although it tries to raise its head sometimes. I am striving to get to know the spiritual life of a woman who has been through a lot of things already. Yes, the female spiritual life is completely different than the male; each of them has its beauties and a man doesn't only strive to dive

¹⁷⁹ Merz quotes these Lamartine's verses in French: „Ne pourrons nous jamais dans l'océan des ages jeter l'ancre un seul jour?“ This is Lamartine's famous poem *Lac (Lake)* from the collection *Méditations poétiques* published in 1820 which raised him into the front lines of romantic poets. The poem, written in memory of his former love, speaks about the transience of everything temporal.

into his soul and from there extract the crystals of Eternity, but he also searches for them in the soul of his female friend. And in her soul a man finds a lot, because at the bottom of her soul there is something of the Madonna and this is what we are actually looking for. And it is possible that this is the search for those eternally-beautiful sparks, the longing and love. God's plan is being executed so marvelously. In marriage, whose goal is the expansion of mankind, we achieve this connection in a thoroughly spiritual way. As to the inborn religious striving – this is all a search for parts of Him and the Madonna. This is what is beautiful in Dulka. Marriage is not her ideal. She is enthusiastic about various ideas, reads diligently, actually she even studied philosophy, is interested in music. But, one cannot put it all into words. I will write more the next time.

Banja Luka, 30 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

On Dulka's plans for the future

I spoke with Dulka. She is leaving for Krakow soon. She is very happy that she is going to her homeland. She told me how Maraković tried to propose to her, but she avoided the issue saying she doesn't intend to get married, or she might have a Pole for a husband and live in Poland, not in Bosnia.

Banja Luka, 31 July 1915 – (18 years and 7 months)

Visit to a Polish family in Slatina, the beauty of nature at sundown

Tomorrow is Communion... The day before yesterday and today I was in Slatina. Today it was especially beautiful: I was a guest of the Irzykovski family. Again, I had little, very little chance to glance at Dulka's spiritual world. She was telling me about her sister's betrothal and mentioned something to the effect that she hates it most when people smooch... I read *Faust* to her in the forest, and she asked me to correct a letter she is writing to a certain Andrić. I will write it in clean copy tomorrow.

I was returning from Slatina; more on foot than on the bicycle (the front wheel broke down!). The first dusk on Kremerice, shadows of oaks, the last sunrays penetrating through the trees, all of this made a great and gentle impression upon the soul, everything reminded of something greater and more beautiful. Shadows were cast on the Vrbas River. From the bridge, I could see dark-grey waves milling around, while the dark shadows of the willows prowled on the water.

Banja Luka, 10 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Visiting Greta's grave in Travnik

I was in Travnik at Greta's grave. The inscription on the tombstone reads: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." The flowers were blooming; I took one pansy with me. I would prefer to stay longer at the grave and ponder, but I will try to penetrate into the problem of death even without the grave. Travnik is a beautiful town: it has a real Bosnian-Catholic, or better to say, a South Croatian character.

Dulka's conversations about love, his thinking on this subject

I was listening to Dulka's conversation with Oskar on the problem of love. She has a deeper insight into it than Oskar. The latter mixes love, attraction and friendship and makes assertions without any logical connection. Instead of going deductively, proceeding from God or the idea that everything in life has its purpose and to deduce what love it, which connection it has with the Logos and how it finds a real spiritual and bodily expression in marriage. For memory, Dulka wrote something in my diary. I haven't

translated it yet. She got a letter from Ljuba. What she read to me aloud shows that he loves her with all his heart; but she wants only a Pole and wants to live among her people, and not in Bosnia... It is tragic, although Ljuba has a much, much more purified and developed soul than her. Namely, she hasn't met a man's soul yet which strives to cultivate and perfect itself.

Banja Luka, 14 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Criticizing male-female behavior of others, as well as his own

Dulka is a riddle for me. Sometimes she entertains herself and speaks seriously, leading one to conclude of a deeper spiritual life. But today, she was dragging along with Oskar under the arm and smooched (not really, but she tightened her lips, etc.). It's not that I have anything against walking with someone arm in arm, but apparently, it is sensuality which lies at the depth of this freedom and gaiety. I can penetrate much deeper into Oskar's soul. He is now at the right age for smooching: he pulls her hair, her arm, enjoys walking with her arm in arm, etc. With him it is a boyish pleasure, although I know he doesn't have the slightest loathsome thought at the bottom of his mind. But anyway, the background of everything is a child's sensuality. I don't blame him. Not so long ago I myself wanted to walk arm in arm with Roza; I was saying to myself that it was something spiritual, although, as I can now see, it was a veiled sensuality.

The topic of the conversation is spiritualism. Mother is ill; I fear for her.

Banja Luka, 17 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Dulka is going away the day after tomorrow. In Vienna, she will stay at my landlady's. I feel sorry for her...

Banja Luka, 18 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Visiting a Protestant church, listening to the sermon and commenting on it

An Imperial day. *Wehrmann in Eisen*¹⁸⁰ unveiled in Vienna. Kovno¹⁸¹ fell. Pastor gave a beautiful sermon in the Protestant church. He took a verse from the Psalms: "They trust in horses and chariots, and we in God..." A powerful thought. The enemies trusted in the mass of soldiers, cannon, etc., but nevertheless they were defeated. Yes, the words of the Psalms are eternal. (...) Otherwise, Protestants are Jews in the noblest sense of the word. They hold themselves as a chosen people whom God helps and look upon their enemies as symbols of evil and vice... like in ancient times. They still lack the objectivity and justice which finds traits of greatness even in the enemy. The impression in the church is rather elevated; it possesses a lot of spiritual greatness and secrecy. This torment (...) could regenerate mankind. It is a pity that Luther didn't carry out his reform within the Roman Church. Battles are all in vain... at the end the world will slowly drift towards the center.

Critical of spiritualism

In the afternoon, I was with the Grünwalds for coffee at Dulka's. (It's her name-day... she's leaving tomorrow.) She played with the cards, and then they engaged in spiritualism. Until I get the permission of the Church, I will not involve myself in it (namely, one should respect authority, because otherwise the whole social setup goes to hell!). I saw the plate moving and answering questions. Speaking of future things. The

¹⁸⁰ An artistic sculpture in the arcades near the Vienna City Hall.

¹⁸¹ Second largest city in Lithuania.

table moves horribly; it knocks according to beat, it squeaks – factually incredible. I watched carefully if anyone was cheating; but I didn't notice a thing. They all swear it is not their doing. I'm skeptical until I try it for myself. Tymyszczyn also spoke to me a lot about materialization. But, who can trust him? These are not spirits; these are some unknown psychic powers at work (hypnosis, magnetism, telepathy, they are all the manifestation of one essence!).

The acts of Satan in the world and his lies

It's a fact that the acts of Satan in the world are truly awful. I needn't even mention the task of Mephistopheles, but here he has a suitable field in which this king of lies acts; the evil acts. So many people have gone mad... It might have to do with Satan who is being expelled on the feast of St. John. So many intelligent people speak about this without prejudice, that it's a bit odd. For a twentieth century man to think of such things – magic, spirits, witches... But there is something factual in this medieval witchcraft. We know that they cheated people, but there were also those who possessed various psychic powers and did the so-called supernatural things. I heard that some Muslim priests can tell the future. Maybe with the help of spiritualism.

Thinking about Antichrist

I already sense the spirit of Antichrist who is descending upon the world. This will be a genius and an evil man combined in the same person, who will know both the natural and the supernatural evil powers and who will perform miracles even greater than Christ. And the world will convert to him; monism¹⁸² will flourish because the Antichrist will be a monist. This is how I see things: all things spiritual will be seen as a manifestation of matter over which he has complete power. Yes, yes, Du Prel says that we would see the world differently if our brain was different. If human brain changed just a little bit, this would be evident. I believe we would see this more or less; but the world would remain the same and those inborn ideas of the Trinity would be perceived more or less.

Feels the need for confession

I am terribly sorry for Dulka. I gather that towards her I already feel an ennobled friendship. There wasn't even a handshake which would support the feelings that I'm a male. Thank God, just let her go on and evolve.

Due to this dabbling in spiritualism I wish to go to confession. The impression of this writing is learned, stupid and immature at the same time. These are the things about which a man cannot make judgements without being prejudiced. There are many things, my friend Horatio, in this world...

I didn't do a thing. Terrible.

Banja Luka, 19 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

A sorrowful parting with Dulka, decision to work for others

Dulka left. I could barely hold back my tears. She thanked me for everything and left. And now I feel like crying all the time. Life is terrible. One starts to dream a beautiful dream, and suddenly it is all gone, as if it didn't exist at all. I know, time will heal everything and maybe I will forget her completely. But this very thought breeds horror in me. I am caught in a feeling like when Lavrecki left Lisa¹⁸³ (but, we are not in love...!) and

¹⁸² Monism – a philosophical system which reduces all the phenomena to a single spiritual or material principle according to which the world is absolutely understandable by itself and explainable by itself. It is a religion of scientific materialism, founded by Ernst Haeckel.

¹⁸³ Characters from Turgenev's work *Home for the Gentry*

he, to kill these feelings of sorrow, went to work for the people. I will also try not to think of it and work a lot for others and for myself. May God be with her.

Banja Luka, 20 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Spending time with friend in nature on Petrićevac

She is now in the theatre in Zagreb. Everything has passed. I look through the window and in an instant, it appears that she is coming, but then I remember that she is not here.

This evening I lay with Oskar on Petrićevac¹⁸⁴. We listened to the music of cicadas and other insects. The shadows of trees were, in Oskar's words, soft *à la Corot*¹⁸⁵. He understands the life of nature. But there is no altruism in him.

Banja Luka, 22 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Now Dulka is on her way to Krakow. I was following her all along. Her individuality is gradually fading in my soul, and the image of the Eternal-female is appearing.

Mother is terrible. Poland is being divided...

Banja Luka, 25 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

He cannot get Dulka out of his head

The day before yesterday I had a wonderful prayer to the Mother of God. We were very close; of course, in this immense closeness there was a desire to get even closer. And in this passionate prayer again there was a void and a burning desire for Her.

Since Dulka is here no more, I am having a hard time. I work a lot, and due to pouring rain I rarely leave the house. I sleep very badly and due to that I've grown terribly weak. There is a maelstrom of thoughts in my head and I always think of Dulka: what is she doing, what could I write to her, what could I say, etc. I don't understand myself. Love doesn't exist. She is dear to me as all other people of a beautiful soul. But, she is female and this is again something completely different. Although I tried to erase this difference between male and female, I realize that it's impossible. Both man and woman are humans: each with their traits and their purpose in life.

I discussed with Buconjić the "inborn" ideas. I said: if they didn't exist, I wouldn't believe that God is. He doubted my words. The question of monogamy – is it an ethical principle – is also interesting.

I already received postcards from Dulka from Zagreb and Vienna.

Banja Luka, 30 August 1915 – (18 years and 8 months)

Still thinking of Dulka

My life is drifting along without deeper feelings. I study Latin, walk, play tennis.

Dulka is often on my mind. Her eyes make that deep impression on me as is described in Brown's *Abschied von England*, the scene at the unveiling of the *Iron knight*.

¹⁸⁴ Petrićevac – suburbs of Banja Luka on a hill where Pope John Paul II on 22nd June 2003 declared Ivan Merz blessed.

¹⁸⁵ French: in the manner of the French painter Corot

Banja Luka, Sunday, 5 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Doubts concerning faith, confused feelings, problems of love and marriage

Let me confide again to my best friend!¹⁸⁶ I was in a terrible state of mind the whole day. I couldn't recollect myself properly in the church, nagging thoughts were pressing upon me questioning whether I am merely deceiving myself, is it all just a false assumption. Along with all that, I had a terrible conflict with nature. Namely, here I am at a disagreement with myself.

True, there is no difference between male and female, but I inadvertently flash a smile at a girl passing by. What an offence! By doing that I degrade her to the level of an animal – and myself as well – because I am showing that we are not the same. And marriage itself. Isn't it a stupid prejudice? Do people have to take each other as husband and wife? I know, the question is abnormal, because my reason tells me about the laws of nature and metaphysics which are at play in marriage too. But again, this stunted brain! It is desperate that a man cannot be by himself and is seeking someone else. This again implies that there is something spiritual, and we are afraid of that. This is sheer stupidity – spirituality, it doesn't exist. It is best to deny everything. *Aut Caesar, aut nihil* – either a Catholic or a nihilist, this is what I maintain. But why these terrible doubts, this vivisection of oneself? And along with everything else, there is egoism which makes me disgusted with myself.

Admittedly, I am on my way out of these confusing feelings. The image of the Madonna in purple is before my eyes!

Banja Luka, 9 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Conversation with Dr. Maraković about literature, love and marriage

Yesterday and today I took a walk with Ljubo. Yesterday we walked along Petrićevačka Road and Krešo was with us (...).

Tonight, Ljubo was telling me about his intentions, about his paper on Kos and how he intended to resurrect Croatian drama. A lot of beautiful ideas. We spoke a lot about the society *Nova et vetera* and on French religious drama... He recommended me to read *The Imitation of Christ*.¹⁸⁷

In the end, we debated about love. He holds that the realization of love is – marriage. Love without a material substance is not love. Love in poetry (Dante) was a striving for this realization. The love in the novels is fruitless because marriage for them is a matter of a small-town mentality. This is actually good; and the metaphysical relationship between God and the Madonna does not change here in the least. Until now I held that this love, “our” love without any material substance is purely spiritual, whereas now I see that it is in the Will of Nature that this spiritual relationship, connected with a striving for beauty, is directed toward the unification of souls in a child.

This is something that deserves further thought!

¹⁸⁶ As Merz often in his environment didn't find people who could fully understand his inner feelings and the crises he was passing through, he frequently confided to his Diary with whom he shared what was bothering him; in such a way, he left us valuable descriptions of his inner life and spirituality which developed and ripened.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. After the Holy Scripture it was the most frequently read spiritual book in the past centuries. Merz will read it often during studies and in the war and quote it in his Diary.



Dr. Ljubomir Maraković, Ivan Merz's teacher and educator

Banja Luka, 13 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Continuing dialogue about love

In the following days, after dinner I would talk with Ljubo mainly about love. He holds that love cannot be completely separated from sensuality (the refined one!). We love a certain woman because of her very nature, her hair, eyes. Then there comes a moment when one likes to kiss (he sees it in a humorous way!). All of this is sensuality.

We live in an anti-Christian age. The state and marriage. Marriages are different now! A man, says Ljubo, should get married in order to place his full trust in somebody. He loves children, but it doesn't satisfy him. Yes, this is how it is, but it is too conventional! It seems to me he didn't attempt to penetrate into the very essence of human love.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 18 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Thoughts about the ethical side of war, walks with Dr. Maraković whom he admires

Today I found out that I will have to take my army medical exam again. I am not too happy about this. In truth, I would prefer peace and am not convinced that the war is about ethical truth, although its foundations are ethical. A man might sacrifice his blood if he were deeply convinced of the idea.

I am taking a walk with Ljubo almost every day. Yesterday under the moonlight we were on the other side, and today in Šeher. Tymczyczyn painted a Bosnian motif in water color. A small house, greenery, and the Vrbas River underneath. Not a great work of art.

About Ljubo I must say that he is finer and finer with every passing day. He is not perfect, but he is wonderful.

In the soul – a void and shallowness: lack of natural faith.

Banja Luka, 21 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Desires Communion, interested in studying Christ's life

I am disgusted with myself. I have terrible dreams that I do not wish to remember when I wake. In my soul, a terrible shallowness reigns. This eternal studying of Latin has become a bore. I am tired, I long for nature and art. The evening is so Christian, ready for

every grand thought, and when the day breaks, it all vanishes, and a man is so weak, he can't even comprehend the thoughts he entertained the previous evening.

I yearn for Communion. I must admit, I neglected my religious life terribly. I would love to study the life of Christ, I would love to read the thoughts of great men about Him and I would melt in this enthusiasm studying Him.

Banja Luka, 24 September 1915 – (18 years and 9 months)

Thinking about the existence and purpose of all creation

I hold a pencil in my hand. I let it fall. It falls on the floor. I turn the switch and the electric lamp turns on. Is there any purpose in my asking whether the pencil exists, as well as gravity, is there a light? No. We should only enter into their essence, to seek out their purpose.

Is there any purpose in my asking myself if love exists when I see that it does. I mustn't be such an egoist to deny it out of fear, not to admit that I myself am an ordinary man subject to the Will of the World. The most important aspect is only its essence; actually, we shouldn't ask ourselves if it is good to be exposed to everything. Yes, we must be convinced that everything that exists is good because it has a purpose. And love exists, it has its purpose. Evil exists too; the good also has its purpose because it is intended to create.

A wonderful moonlight. I am walking with Ljubo and Mihać in silence. A full music circulates through the nature. The Creator of all this is even more beautiful!

Banja Luka, Friday, 1 October 1915 – (18 years and 10 months)

Transience, and at the end of the journey Resurrectio

This life is a hard and strenuous work. I identified myself to a great extent with the spirit of ancient Rome and its literature. I know a lot of this literature, but I still haven't read all the prescribed works. Perhaps I would have been already finished, if it weren't for my aching eyes.

It is dark outside – black, dense clouds. Odd thoughts come to mind and, without knowing how, I remember Dulka. It is all a dream. I met her and this is past. The parents will also pass and everything will look like a dream until I myself enter the dark, terrible alley; no, it is neither dark nor terrible, but light, full of supernatural luminance! It is there that the Resurrectio¹⁸⁸ is celebrated.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 7 October 1915 – (18 years and 10 months)

Conversation with Dr. Maraković on the founding of a congregation and on his diary

My tooth aches. I worked quite a lot. I mainly read Tacitus. I had a walk with Ljubo. We spoke about setting up some kind of congregation¹⁸⁹ here. It is indispensable. We also spoke about his diary. Namely, he finished today a lot that he had left out previously. I asked him if he intended to publish it, but he said no, but if someone finds it after his death, it will be published anyhow.¹⁹⁰ However, he is not writing it with that intention, but because of the inner need for self-analysis and a proclamation of his thoughts.

They say that Bulgaria has involved itself in the war.

¹⁸⁸Latin: Resurrectio: Resurrection

¹⁸⁹ A congregation devoted to Mary, with the purpose of promoting spiritual life

¹⁹⁰ Maraković's Diary is preserved. It was inherited by his relatives, the family of Dr. Branko Richter in Zagreb.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 16 October 1915 – (18 years and 10 months)

Literary traits among ancient Romans, Romanic nations and the Germans

I have roughly completed everything I need for the Latin exam. I worked a lot and learned a lot. I think I probed rather deeply into Roman literature. I read Horace a lot and I understand him well. Generally, I noticed that it is not only the French literature which has an educational character – as Ljubo says – but that of all the Romanic nations. Horace wants to improve morals, and he comes forward as a preacher to the people. Virgil sets great examples in front of his readers. Ovid is the greatest artist among them, and he also has many educational elements. Philemon and Baucius. I prefer not to speak about historiography, because it is by its very nature moralizing. Then, the greatest Romanic work *Divina Comedia* has the deepest and directly pedagogical character. We suffer all those pains in order to improve ourselves. What is the situation among the Spaniards, I don't know; but I have the feeling that the same could be found in *Don Quixote* and *Calderon*. French literature in the 18th century is completely under the impression of moralizing, and Romanticism (in novels) couldn't shake this off itself. What is *Atala*? A pedagogical work? But, I almost forgot Emile Rousseau. Actually, Ljubo brilliantly noticed that naturalists, like Balsac, in their digressions often play moralizing chords.

How about the Germans? Completely different. *Faust* is the most striking example of the difference between the Romanic and Germanic nations. Here, one can see the noble egoism, the penetration into one's self and the drive to experience everything. There is not a shred of moralizing: *Faust* could never be a leader of a pedagogical revolution.

Yes, Romanic nations are social and therefore pedagogical and leaning toward the arts, while the Germans are philosophers. But, what about the Slavs? I leave this question to the future.

Remembering Greta, her death and her continuing existence

Yesterday Greta again came to my mind. I was sitting on her grave and read out her name: Greta Teschner. Strange thing, the inscription on the tombstone! And in this grave, lies the one who played the piano, and I stood by her, the one whom I loved even without knowing it. And I saw that it really was love. It seems funny, because I myself don't know what love is and I am too much of an egoist to succumb to that feeling without a philosophical justification – a real, burning, first love. I have the feeling that it will survive all. Yes, if she were alive I would give all that I am to her, all the latent love would flow to her like a thousand voices from an organ.

No, it's been enough; she is no more and let us leave the dead in peace. Dead? What does this word mean? A girl lies on a sofa, her hair is golden, she looks just the same as the one who spoke so nicely, but she doesn't move. Her mother comes, moves her head, calls her. Nothing, not a sound. They take this body and bury it. There – this means to be dead. An incredible ceremony! And we think about her; she lives in our hearts and her essence still exists; everywhere, up, down, around us and in us and this is eternal. We shall stop here. One ought not to think of eternity unprepared.

Banja Luka, 25 October 1915 – (18 years and 10 months)

Finally passed the Latin exam

The Latin exam is over.¹⁹¹ Here is what they asked me: in the written part I had to translate King Titus from Croatian into Latin, and a chapter from Livy's 39th book – the

¹⁹¹ Merz took the Latin exam in Sarajevo on 21st October 1915. On that occasion, he was staying in a Jesuit monastery which was situated within the Sarajevo seminary. He had to pass the Latin exam because he didn't learn Latin in high school, and this was a precondition for continuation of the studies of law and philosophy at the Vienna University.

death of Hannibal – from Latin into Croatian. Oral: Alcaic stanza, I had to translate the 31st ode from the first book and one paragraph from *Dialogus de oratoribus*. I was pretty good. Kesić asked me Horatio, Virgil, Cicero. As to the latter, I wasn't quite good, I didn't know the philosophical work *De amicitia*.

I stayed in the Jesuit monastery. Already at five in the morning the bells toll, the organ plays and they sing the church songs. There is a lot of poetry in all that. I am now focusing on French and I want to immerse myself in art.

Some places in John's Gospel about Communion are simply brilliant. During the last Mass, I thought a lot about them and penetrated into them so deeply that I mystically felt the transubstantiation and that Christ is present right there and that we should bow down to him. Yes, we want to pray to that Christ who lived long ago, and we, poor people, don't know that the same One is present here, even more beautiful.



The Sarajevo Seminary where Ivan stayed when he took his high school examination in Latin.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 28 October 1915 – (18 years and 10 months)

Seeks a deeper meaning in everything and speaks about this with a friend

When one is not working, a strange dissatisfaction enters the soul. In this past year, I somehow stepped out from that literary, artistic enthusiasm. True, I still love to read and observe, but I cannot grasp the deeper meaning in everything.

Lately I have been spending a lot of time with Krešo. Today he left. He was handsome, had fun with the girls, showed interest in deeper problems, but without knowing why he distanced himself from our fundamental principles. He denies the existence of inborn ideas saying that man by nature possesses only the capacity of receiving what the outer world impresses upon him. The ideas of justice and truth do not seem inborn to him, but also learned. He ignores Romanticism and literature.

I remembered Roman Tieck.¹⁹² Pity, a great pity for him. He was the first Croatian poet in a Faustian spirit. Penetrates into the deeper issues of life, seeks solace to his discontent. I will study him more.

¹⁹² Roman TIECK (Korčula 1891 – 1915) is a pseudonym for a young poet Kuzma Petković. He published in magazines *Luč* and *Naše Kolo*. He aligned himself to Lj. Maraković and the new Catholic Romantism.

Conversations with Dr. Maraković about art and literature

I am seeing Ljubo every day. I looked at his paintings; he really has a lot of them. Yesterday I looked at Spitzweg and I saw that Romanticism among the Germans is almost the only great art which expresses their character and which has a place of dignity in world art. And all those Corynths and other popular ones – they are mere triviality.

Yes, he gave me three of his poems as a gift. *Enoh Arden* is a pretty idyllic epic... There are no great events here, nor deep emotions; no, this is an anthem to marriage, ordinary and simple, and at the same time an elegy to a seafarer's life... The entire work is permeated by intimate religiousness...

(Here follows a brief review of the content of the poems, quotations of verses which made an impression upon Merz and a comment on the poems and their key characters)

I am now travelling to Vienna to enroll. Already I began to miss Vienna. Soon I will have my army medical exam.¹⁹³

Vienna, 12 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)¹⁹⁴

A review of The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

It is difficult to give a completely clear characterization of this novel. There are scenes which excel in refined psychology, while others remind me of the style of a criminal novel. (...) The work is full of contradictions, and all the poet's views are outright odd; maybe even evil. (...) It is known what Wilde was accused of at the time of Dorian's publication and consequently, this work seems to be a kind of poet's self-confession. Perhaps he was striving to improve, but a vivid memory prevented him in doing so. In order to shake off these feelings from himself – like Goethe in *Werther* – he gratified his artistic instinct and portrayed himself in this work; his double nature: the esthetic – ideal one in Basil the painter and the vegetative one in Dorian Gray. (...) In Gray the tragic destiny of modern man is shown, a man of decadence. (...) His life was evil and he was bound to crack up. (...) His whole philosophy of life is "pleasure"... Love for him is a physiological process. He observes the exterior and does not delve into deeper problems. (...)

(Here follows an extensive description of the work and its contents with numerous quotations and a critical review of the work, its author and characters as well as the message of the work)

Vienna, 13 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

A review of the romantic opera Lohengrin by Richard Wagner

Regarding the music, I understood the foreplay best. An azure ether, with angels slowly appearing from two sides carrying a chalice in the middle. Their contours grow stronger and stronger and they descend with the chalice on the ground. The motif of the *Grail* is in extremely high tones (similar to the *Parsifal*). There is a stream in the middle which touches the earth and encompasses all people with love, reaching further and further until the whole world is full of this magnificent love. The angels place the chalice on the ground where the chosen ones receive it; they rise into the air, losing gradually their contours, until they disappear in the blue ether. The content is from Germanic history.

¹⁹³ This is the end of the 4th notebook of Bl. Ivan Merz's Diary which covers a period from 26 June 1915 until 28 October 1915.

¹⁹⁴ This is the beginning of the 5th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 12 November 1915 until 9 December 1915.

Wagner, of course, elaborated these motifs a lot. The technique is rather antique – not as expressive as in *Parsifal*.

An all-embracing human idea is present here, an idea present as far back as the ancient Greeks in *Zeus and Semele* and *Odysseus and Circe*, likewise, in *Lohengrin* – the story of a tragic genius. In this work, Wagner succeeded to give an ideal historical milieu. It is a wonderful work full of lyric melodies and psychological fine points in music. (...) Yes, this is the primeval image of yearning when God through the Holy Spirit descended upon a woman and gave the God-Man.

(Here follows an extensive presentation of the content of the opera, its characters and a comment on the message of the work)

Vienna, Monday, 15 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

A review of Sophocles' tragedy King Oedipus with a special emphasis on the role of the chorus

A truly remarkable work. I studied it because of the chorus¹⁹⁵ and came to the conclusion that this is the highest point which a chorus may achieve. I maintain that chorus is the key element of the future Croatian solemn drama; it must be a representative of an ideal observer from the people; it must be the quintessence of the people. (...) Let's get back to Oedipus. The chorus is an ideal observer who experiences the entire course of the tragedy and thereby is spiritually cleansed and ennobled. This is what an observer ought to be; pious to the extreme, and hugely objective at the same time. He laments the misfortune of the hero, and draws consequences from the work. This tragedy is great due to a deep religious idea. (...)

(Here follows an extensive presentation of the content of the tragedy and its characters and a comment on the dramatic side of the work with a stress on the role of the chorus in the work itself)

Vienna, 18 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

A review of the drama Bride from Messina by Friedrich Schiller

When I saw the *Bride from Messina* in the theatre the other day, I was elated. If I had written about this work at that moment, I would surely say that it is something extraordinary. Now I speak differently because I became familiar to an extent with Schiller's means of presentation and came to the conclusion that Schiller cannot be compared to Goethe by far. His works are too much the fruit of a great reason, technical prowess, diligence and learning, but not a spontaneous outpouring, pain. (...) Zipper is right in saying that this work is not a tragedy of destiny and that the *Bride from Messina* is the work of a genius but not a genial work.

(Here follows a lengthy account of the contents of the drama and its characters and a comment on the dramatic side of the work with a stress on the role of the chorus in the work itself)

Discussions about the future Croatian drama or opera

I spoke with Jušić at length about the future drama and he says he is in favor of a future opera. Already some Stipančić (if I get the name right) wrote a libretto which needs music. It is the coronation of King Tomislav; he would have a lot of people on stage and

¹⁹⁵ Choir or actors in a drama

loud music out of which as a Grail-motif in high silvery tone the motif of the Croatian anthem would emerge. Great idea; but I think that we do not have an appropriate historic moment for such a solemn musical drama; because everything is known already, while in mythical characters (Marko and other) it is much easier because from them one can create representatives of the people and at the same time the entire humanity. History can produce some “royal dramas” like in Shakespeare, where a conflict of characters is shown, but it is never a carrier of the idea of the entire humanity.

Vienna, 22 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

Review and comment of Goethe's drama Iphigenia in Tauris

In Volkstheater I saw *Iphigenia in Tauris*. The work is extraordinarily beautiful, but like the other Goethe's dramas, non-dramatic. Goethe is no dramatist at all. In its deeper idea, *Iphigenia* is like *Faust*, *Parsifal* and other. It is all about the salvation of pure humanity. (...) The leap from Euripides's *Iphigenia* to Goethe's one is tremendous: a leap from the Antique to the Christian world view. In Euripides, for a good end she can even make use of a deception. True, it would never happen in Sophocles, but Iphigenia is purified by a Christian spirit, she never lies, but wins over everyone with pure truth, even if in the face of death. (...) Her religious life is beautifully presented. Those prayers to Diana and the gods could easily relate to the Blessed Mary and to Him. Only the form is classical, as well as the story, but the idea and execution are Christian. (What would the Jesuits say about this?!)

(Here follows a lengthy account of the content of the drama and its characters and a comment on the technical execution of the work)

Vienna, 23 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

Visit to a gallery and a critical comment on paintings he saw there

One might lose one's head looking at the beautiful nudes by Titian. Some sadness envelops a heart looking at these wonderful, beautiful, nude human bodies which are tightly bonded with nature and represent nature's most beautiful flower and decoration. If



anyone would have even a single nasty thought, we ought to tell him that he is corrupt, not the painting. But, God, the human body is like an outer image of the soul.

Titian, Ecce homo, 1560

Just like the world is an idea of the Godhead and a work of art an expression of the world of the artist, so the exterior of a man corresponds to this inner harmony. "So, God created man in His own image" *Magnificat Dominus!* (...) *Ecce homo* – Christ is in the upper left corner, and although he is not in a predominant position, the composition is arranged in such a way that he is the center of action. Hands, posture of people, head and everything else is arranged to lead our eyes to Him. Along with that, here he is dramatic as probably no other Venetian. There are many other beautiful paintings in the first section of the museum. Giorgione is represented by a female head which I would almost call divine. He called it “a girl”, but actually it deserves the title of Madonna, much more than numerous paintings

bearing that name. (...) I liked Palma il Vecchio with his Venetians: all the paintings are anthems to fashion and Venetian girls, without depth. (...) Bellini is much more intimate with good landscapes. Cima de Cortegiano features his Alps in all his paintings, and the scene from the Madonna's life he also places in nature. He is idyllic, devoid of any dramatic content.

Plans for the drama about the Prince Marko

The future drama about the Prince Marko faces immense difficulties. He is an ideal – and epic character; in a drama, he couldn't act and fight on all sides, because he is the ideal of the people and conciliatory, winning over the others to his side. If we wish to be true to the poem, in a drama he would have to keep silent and experience the whole action within himself. In order to create a dramatic figure out of him, we would have to find him an antagonist, and a real fight would have to ensue which ends with his victory. But how can we weave into it the chorus – that solemn conciliatory principle which expresses the ideas of the people and all of mankind? And again, to insert the theme or idea of the yearning of a man for his ideal woman (*Eternal-female*) which can exist no longer because a man needs a real love which has a sensual basis, and not worship.

Vienna, Wednesday, 24 November 1915 – (18years and 11 months)

Dilemmas about the study, concern for his future profession

I am now in a much better mood than I was several days before. I found at least some entertainment; I read, although I do not possess the works which I should read. I am not going to buy them because I already spent too much money on books, artistic postcards, coffee rooms, sweets, taverns and other pastimes. I would like to study systematically Goethe, French lyrics, heroic epos, I wish to learn languages, history, art, everything, but I don't have the books which I need for that. So, I must make do with my poor library. After all, the history of language and details from literature are also interesting. I am supposed to be a lawyer and I haven't been to a lecture on law yet, I go to some lectures in humanities, and I learn a lot by listening: but it is not the real thing. I would love to immerse myself into it and explore everything in detail. When I think of my future profession, to be a state employee, I am terrified at the thought of having to work in an area in which I find no pleasure at all. I would like to be a teacher in Bosnia, to open the minds of children, showing them a deeper connection of things, rousing their enthusiasm for faith and the arts, and in the meantime, be active in the field of literature, maybe even write. It is not some egoism, the altruistic element is immensely strong in me, and I am not satisfied merely to accumulate wealth, but wish to help others spiritually, give them of my blood and my knowledge.

Admires Christ and his love, strives for him and wishes to unite with him

Lately, I worked somewhat more intensively on the cultivation of my soul. I read *The Imitation of Christ* and reflected upon it. It is a great book, full of mystic content which I need. One sees on every page how small one is, and how great is He who died for us, who gives us the Bread – God, Himself, all that greatness, that Love, to us. It is beyond words what one feels when He unites with us; here is the desire for more and more, for the entire Christ, for the eternal Light, for God the Creator, for whom the heart strives strongly, bursting forth. Yes, and in every single moment one may succumb to a thought, a glance, something empty; and again, one always yearns and dares to ask for that which is hidden in a man's soul as if by a veil, which sometimes shines forth and illuminates a part of one's interior with supernatural light. This is what I would like to be in my greatness, to be a non-body and connected with this Luminance.

Reviews of two read books

I am reading Montesquieu's *Contemplation on the Greatness and Decline of the Romans*. (...) I read Björns's village novel *Synnöve Solbakken*. A pretty piece. A eulogy to village love. When the main female protagonist sings on the hill guarding her sheep, we have the impression of listening to the singing of a nightingale resounding in the forest, mixing the gaiety with the pain and longing of lovers. And this sad song resounds through the forest, this song of love.

Again, he analyses the problem of love and tries to find an answer

Again, one might ask what love is. An axiom which moves life onward, both nature and mankind and it would perhaps be the best not to get lost in speculation. This is how Providence has been arranged, and we must submit to it, we shouldn't in Bazarov's manner suppress this longing for a woman which is in our heart. Although, to be fair, when I go to the dancing hall, when I look how males and females got to this place and no one wants to admit that it was the opposite sex which drew him / her here but will say that he / she came merely to relax. They dance, exchange words and tease each other; a real love game of sparrows and nightingales. Observing this, I wonder what love is, where it comes from, the question – am I subject to it, and I say no, I merely watch from a distance this game of love. But at the same time there is in me a desire for love; not only transcendental, but also an ordinary human love, understanding, warm feelings. I remember Dulka often (my God, Greta seems to be forgotten already!) and I must admit that I might fall in love with her. True, she is far away from me, in my memories of her soul only the eternal-female has crystallized, and this is surely the reason why I think of her so much.

Banja Luka, Monday, 29 November 1915 – (18 years and 11 months)

Reflections and planning of the future Croatian drama

(...) For a Croatian drama, a historical content would be appropriate: Zvonimir, Tomislav. One ought to find a tragic guilt in their character and create a drama around it. Admittedly the Greek technique would be the best, with a preliminary because otherwise the chorus in a vivacious Shakespearian piece would have no role at all. But I feel so sorry that I wandered away from the notion of a solemn drama in which Prince Marko could play a role. After all, maybe Tomislav could be the hero of a solemn drama; but this Tomislav should not be the historical one, just like the Sophocles' and Aeschylus' heroes were not historical. Neither was Odysseus (he was a thief!, etc.). This topic, the yearning for the ideal female and a tragic breakdown would be more fitting for an opera than a real drama. Along with everything else, I fear a future drama; it cannot be a tragedy, and a presentation of irreconcilable antagonists, a living battle takes away from the solemnity and silence. The Greeks are tragic, but in them the tragic guilt of the protagonist is metaphysical; therefore, their tragedy is solemn. But what would ours be like? One ought to study heroic poems.

I live in a state of discontent. I have no real mission in life.

Review of Björnsen's book *Synnöve Solbakken*

Synnöve Solbakken is a pretty thing. The Norwegian environment is nicely depicted, but there are many drawbacks in realistic detail. It portrays life in a village, people go to church, to Confirmation, weddings are celebrated, a fight breaks out, etc. The key protagonists are the peasants. (...)

(Here follows a presentation of the content, analysis and critique of the work)

Banja Luka, Thursday, 2 December 1915 – (19 years)

Conversations with Dr. Maraković about the topics of Croatian drama

I was accepted into the army because on the medical exam I forgot to say that I have weak eyes.

Regarding the future drama, I spoke with Ljubo. He is thinking of a pentalogy: “St. Anastasius, Tomislav, Zvonimir, Svačić and something else.” A great thought, especially the first drama which would include the prophecy about the future Christian people – the Croats. The unity of the place would be preserved, these would be some analytical dramas. “The Croatian Kingdom”. One is at pains to find those great faults which destroyed the kingdom. Therefore, Ljubo thinks that we should find this in Glagolitic¹⁹⁶ struggle. But for the moment, I still remain with my heroes from folk poetry.

Review of a Balsac's novel, complains of losing connection with God

I read a German translation of Balsac's novel *A Woman of Thirty*. I didn't quite grasp the idea. It is probably focused in the words of the dying Helen: there is no real happiness outside the law. Everything moves around it. The work is very disjointed, actually, full of the effects of criminal novels, but one can sense that great Balsac nevertheless. Napoleon's glory is portrayed in bright colorful lines... The vibrations of a female soul, all the secret corners are presented with such finesse, actually with an adoration of the female soul, the soul of a lady from high society. But, sincerely, I admit that Balsac accumulated so many thoughts about the female psyche that I couldn't follow him. Probably I am going to read it again.

The connection between my soul and God has grown somewhat cold. I will try to become intimate with Him again and to be happy.

Banja Luka, Friday, 3 December 1915 – (19 years)

Ante was really killed...

Banja Luka, Thursday, 9 December 1915 – (19 years)

Communion for the killed friend, reads Pavlimir by Junije Palmotić

Today I received Communion. I dedicated it to the late little Ante... I had a walk with the Grünwalds. Oskar is still very sensuous, but his taste seems terribly refined. On a picture, he notices refinement or mistake immediately; also in other things.

For the sake of Croatian drama, and especially the meter, I read *Pavlimir* by Junije Palmotić. As a drama, it has no great worth. *Pavlimir* is an epic character, a saint who does not initiate any act. Timor and Sniježnica are more dramatic. This is not an analytic drama, but actually an account of the foundation of Dubrovnik in dialogue, where all people are ideal characters. The village scenes give the work a charm. It reminds me very much of Italian pastoral games. Chorus is at times well positioned, but it lacks expansive depth. (...)

¹⁹⁶ Croats were the only nation within the Catholic Church who, alongside Latin, had a privilege for more than a thousand years to use their national language in liturgy long before the II Vatican Council gave this right to all nations. This was the heritage of SS. Cyril and Methodius. For the folk language in liturgy Croats used a special script called Glagolitic which was invented by the Slavic apostles SS. Cyril and Methodius when they Christianized the Slavs. There is a theory that SS. Cyril and Methodius actually adopted this script from the Croats. In any case, this script is still today one of the symbols of the national cultural and religious identity of the Croatian people. By referring to “struggle” Merz implies the struggle of the Croatian priests and folk from the Middle Ages to hold liturgy in their native language.

(Here Merz gives copious quotations from the work, analyzes them and comments, presenting the key characters of the drama, describes the role of the chorus and gives his assessment)¹⁹⁷

Banja Luka, Thursday, 9 December 1915 – (19 years)¹⁹⁸

Completing a review of Pavlimir

Once again: Pavlimir himself is an epic character, more action proceeds from Timor and Snježnica – the demons – although it is only formal action. They are not strong antagonists: their means of action are intrigues. Therefore, intrigue is the main dramatic plot, and we know in advance that Pavlimir will win: it is his destiny. The idea of the work is a glorification of Dubrovnik:

For as long as the sun shines
Spinning around the world
Your glory will always shine
Eternal among us.
Beautiful art thou, o Dubrovnik,
A white and noble city
Who is bound to spread your glory
All over the known world.

This is sung by shepherds in different variations praising and glorifying the future Dubrovnik, a hearth of freedom. (...)

Banja Luka, Saturday, 11 December 1915 – (19 years)

Contemplating the stars, Earth and the universe

I am rather sad. After a long time, I recollected myself a little bit in nature. I went to the Petrićevac Road¹⁹⁹. The sickle-shaped moon was in the sky. Around me the black contours of hills, dotted with red lights from the houses. Along with that, barking, an incessant barking of dogs. I turned in the opposite direction and observed one star. It was green and twinkled at great speed as if it wanted to catch up with someone. It trembled speedily. Around it there were other stars, bigger and smaller, and they were arranged in such a way that they seemed to be connected with thin lines giving the impression of an infinitesimal number of geometrical shapes in the sky. While the star was still twinkling, I lowered my gaze and saw something like a black plate. This is the Earth; the Earth which now seems to be the center of this enormous universe. The steadfast and black Earth, and along with it the stars. In this whole scenery, this Earth trembles and vibrates in space, as if suspended on thin lines which are about to break. Fear. It will fall into the abyss, into infinity. No, it won't, no, no, it is safe here, the stars and everything around them is safe, everything keeps an order, everything rushes, turns, moves. Somebody directs it all. Hosanna to Him who gives life to all, who gives the speed, life and purpose!

And we, the people, the little dots on this dark Earth! We are also subject to this magnificent order; we are also parts of this huge purpose...

A pair in love just passed by.

¹⁹⁷ Here ends the 5th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 12 November 1915 until 9 December 1915.

¹⁹⁸ Here starts the 6th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 9 December 1915 until 28 February 2016

¹⁹⁹ The road leading to Petrićevac, a suburbia of Banja Luka, with a large Franciscan church, where the Pope John Paul II on 22nd June 2003 declared Ivan Merz a Blessed of the Catholic Church!

When one meditates like this in nature, it makes one wonder and admire all this beauty; pantheistic thoughts come to mind. But, one must wait for some veil to be lifted in order for everyone to realize the significance of one God.



Corot, Landscape

Impressions about the paintings of Corot

I especially like Corot²⁰⁰. He is a great painter; magnificent landscape painter, possibly one of the world's greatest lyricists. One must observe his paintings for a long time before feeling that great, eternal meaning in them. His biographer rightly says that his paintings are the supreme truth, but no naturalness.²⁰¹ This is truly the meaning of art. Schiller says that a poet mustn't give the image of nature (outer), but must penetrate into its depths in order to comprehend its invisible laws and with the help of that create another nature – the work of art. This is what Corot is like. All his paintings are one mood; actually, the nymphs, people or other living beings in his paintings are like symbols of this mood. This is how they dance, lie, this is how they are enchanted and complement this mood. This may be some kind of Romanticism. If one takes pleasure in the mood of nature more or less appropriate figures emerge in the imagination; a morning, the lifting of mists, a lake, there must be a fisherman preparing on his boat, dusk, some nymphs. He works with the masses; he cares first and foremost about the mood. He is an impressionist in the best sense of the word; sometimes we can't tell whether he is giving us a stone or an ox; but everything contributes to the impression. He paints as he sees, not as he knows. Along with this impressionism, we find classical harmony. Trees, the masses are arranged in such a harmonious way, but this is so discreet, as if it simply has to be that way.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 12 December 1915 – (19 years)

Continues to comment on Corot's paintings

One could write about Corot looking at his paintings. Admittedly, when we say "Corot" we always think of his landscapes, but he is great in portraits and various other compositions too. I remember that painting of a woman (she lowered her head and crossed her arms) where, using fine shadows he gives a soft, fine mood. Along with that, he gives an illustration of the character of the person. A painting similar to this one, full of mood

²⁰⁰ Jean-Baptiste Camille COROT (1796–1875), French painter and graphic artist

²⁰¹ In the continuation Merz gives the same thought in German: Die Bilder haben die höchste Wahrheit aber keine Spur von Wirklichkeit.

and the typical Corot's *tout flote*²⁰² is *A Girl Reading*. Characteristic for him is the painting *Toilette*. It represents that classical motif after a bath: a beautiful nude. But, in addition to that we are in the midst of Corot's nature, and at the back "like a nymph" a girl from Paris leans against a tree, immersed in reading. In other words, a certain impressionism full of that classical silence and harmony; full of impression. After all, he was several times in Rome and studied the old painters (the Barbizones would never do such a thing in order not to lose their individuality). He also has religious paintings, but I don't know them. He was very popular; this lover and friend of nature was the so-called pioneer²⁰³ in painting. Rousseau painted nature exactly so that species of trees can be recognized; Corot painted only what he saw and felt, not what he had known from before... Mrs. Viardot inspired some of his paintings (*Orpheus, Eurydice*, etc.). It would be interesting to study the life of this woman.

He decorated many walls; here also his principle was to paint in a way that the landscapes seem real, as if seen through the window. His atelier was simple, devoid of luxury which other painters had.



This statue of the Bl. Virgin Mary was in the parish church in Banja Luka and Ivan often prayed in front of it (The statue was destroyed in the Homeland War 1991-1995) Ivan took the vow of chastity until marriage in front of the Bl. Virgin Mary in Banja

²⁰² French: everything floats

²⁰³ In the original: Bahnbrecher

Remembering Greta, doesn't intend to fall in love again, vow of chastity to the Blessed Virgin

It is a strange day. I dreamed of Ante – sad dreams, and now I saw Greta's picture again, maybe the second time after her death. O God, my God, terrible. Greta, my dear Greta. When I saw those eyes, dear and mild, the lowered head, the hair, ah, how many times I caressed it, I remember that I ought to remain faithful to her forever; through my whole life she should be an idol to whom I will compose my poems. Every person ought to find such an idol. This seems like a discovery to me: maybe I am forever at peace with nature. The female element has played out its role in my life which it had to play. I will have no more dealings with women. I will not fall in love; this could turn into sensuality. Other women can play the roles of men in my life, especially a fine male friend. But it is terrible when I think I will always have to move in a society full of sensuality. The other day I made a vow of chastity to the Blessed Virgin until marriage; maybe it will last for my entire life.²⁰⁴ – Good night little Greta! *Vergiss mein nicht!*²⁰⁵

Dream and phantasy, hidden desires, an imaginary Gothic castle

I had a dream.²⁰⁶ My God, if it only was so in reality. This is what I would like. Some dark Byronic tower on a cliff. Black, Gothic, with many small towers and four bigger ones on the corners. Around it there is a crenel²⁰⁷, Gothic. Of the landscape, I imagine fields and a river underneath. In this tower, I desire darkness. From afar, dark-red light can be seen coming from the mansard. Here is my great library: the Faustian room (precisely). Here are the old copper engravings, wood engravings, books in all languages. One wardrobe contains only old things, no matter what; maybe some old preacher's letters. In the other, there are the artistic novelties in all languages. Here is the place where I love to be. Another room is dedicated to astronomy, accessible through a small corridor. Here, in the dark, I imagine a telescope, and there is no roof, in order for the starlit sky and the riding moon to be plainly visible. Here, beside me, is my astronomer who tells me of the situation of the stars that I observe, their purpose, movement, speed. We conclude and define ideas. We admire all that; we think about the universe and empty space, and we feel the *Rector* and *Genitor*²⁰⁸. Then there are the halls. One is chemical, where we study the laws of nature, while in the small hall we produce various compounds and we admire them. There are other halls too. Especially one anatomical and one botanical. The castle contains a church with a large organ. It has no windows; only the eternal red light smolders. It is Gothic, spiritual.

A solemn mass is never celebrated here. When a mass is celebrated, it is only a mass for the dead. The organ plays very deep, and when there is singing, only songs like *Miserere* or *Dies Irae* are performed. Communion is offered every day. In this castle, there are many people like me, who strive to arrive at the ultimate cause, and we all gather in the church when the tower bell tolls twelve times. Following a prayer to the Spirit of Light, one of us stands on the pulpit and speaks for the sake of everyone about what he has found out today. When the ceremony is over, everyone must bow down to the altar and sing sadly: *Miserere Domine, quod ambulemus in tenebris.*²⁰⁹ In this whole castle there is a girl who is sworn to chastity. She has her hair down, black, a pale face, and her black

²⁰⁴ He made this vow of chastity on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the 8th December 1915.

²⁰⁵ German: Forget me not!

²⁰⁶ It is not fully clear whether this was really his dream or only a reverie uncovering his hidden desires and strivings. Probably it was a dream which he embellished with his reveries. In any case this description reveals his inner world and his striving for truth and the purpose of everything that exists.

²⁰⁷ Crenel – the upper edge of the defensive wall in medieval fortresses (similar to a cornice).

²⁰⁸ Latin: *Rector* and *Genitor* – director and parent (words relate to God in relation to the universe).

²⁰⁹ Latin: Have mercy on us, Lord, for we walked in darkness.

eyes are like two charcoals. She is always in sorrow and from time to time everyone is allowed to see her from afar, all in white. No one is allowed to speak to her.

Banja Luka, Tuesday, 14 December 1915 – (19 years)

Impressions after reading texts about poets and painters

My work consists in reading Verlaine. At the moment, I am learning the words, and later I will try to immerse myself in his poetry. I also read a treatise about Troyon. I don't like him even a bit like I do Corot. He is a good animalist, he loves animals, the contrasts of light and darkness (strong influence of Rembrandt) are beautiful; nature and everything else shows a great artist; but in his paintings, there is no poetry as we find in Corot; the lyric of the setting sun, the dance of the nymphs, etc. He was like Corot, a Parisian; he is more of a realist. Unquestionably the greatest painter of animals in the 19th century.

I leafed through an old copy of *Savremenik* magazine. Here I found one beautiful poem by Domjanić; full of Verlaine's lightness, full of fine images. I will copy it down. I read it fast, and it is so impressionistic that I couldn't remember its content in detail. I only remember that the sun sets and that the silhouette of the cross and its shadow grow longer and longer. His eyes are blind, etc.

Banja Luka, 15 December 1915 – (19 years)

Recognizes himself in the verses of Verlaine's poem Streets

My work consists in practicing the piano and learning French. One of the most beautiful of Verlaine's poems and one which suits me is *Streets (Aquarelles)*

(In the rest of this passage Merz quotes this poem in the original, in French. It starts with the following words: Dansons la gigue! J'aimais surtout ses jolis yeux, plus clairs que l'étoile des cieux The content of the poem relates to the poet's memory of a former love. Apparently, Merz recognized himself in this poem which reminds him of his youthful love for Greta).

Banja Luka, 18 December 1915 – (19 years)

Reading his last year's diary perceives changes in himself

How a man changes... I read some pages from the last year's diary and I can nicely judge a spiritual progress in some areas. But, in others I still lag behind. When I read those thoughts about literature, about realism, I wonder that I thought like that at all. I've forgotten a lot of things and I directly feel that at that time literature meant everything to me, whereas now I am only a dilettante. I should immerse myself in it again. *Detractio mater scepsae et superficiality est.*²¹⁰ This is what we modern people are.

Greta would have been 19 today. A girl...

Banja Luka, Monday, 27 December 1915– (19 years)

With the theology student Bilogrivić discusses the work of Satan in the world

I spent my time mostly idling. I am not capable of a systematic, deeper work. I will try to do something before going to the army. During the Christmas vacations I was mostly in the company of Bilogrivić.²¹¹ We spoke a lot about theological matters.

²¹⁰ Latin: Distraction is the mother of scepticism and superficiality.

²¹¹ Msgr. Dr. Nikola **Bilogrivić**, born 1893 in Tuzla. Ordained as priest in 1916. Served as parish priest in Banja Luka. After theological studies, he occupied himself with history. As a Catholic priest and a Croatian

Especially interesting is Satanism. He told me the story of a missionary. He was holding a sermon in a French church when two elegantly dressed gentlemen left the church and started saying to everyone that he is bedazzling the people. They invited him for discussion into a house. He accepted, taking his missionary crucifix with him. A lot of elegant gentlemen gathered. The main color of the hall in which they met was black. There was the throne, covered in black cloth. From the right people in black semi-masks started to come in, and at once a big and strong man came – all in a black mask, terrible to describe! A terrible tense atmosphere hung in the air. In a moment, the missionary took his crucifix, held it forward with his right hand towards the strong one and said: “In the name of the living God get out!” With a terrible noise the black one vanished. It was the devil himself.

I am not too versed in all that, it could be superstition, but for the moment I choose to believe in it firmly. Just like God manifests himself in all possible ways, so the devil has a terrible power in the world. As a matter of fact, his greatest pleasure is when people bow to him. These men have actually done so. These men know what God is, but hate him. This is beyond reason, hugely mysterious, how such a small original sin causes such a catastrophe in the entire humankind. And Satan is evil, something terrible, strong. But yes, we can distance ourselves from him! Weak people!

Special feelings after receiving the Holy Communion

If I were to meet an atheist, I wouldn't be able to tell him what the Eucharist is, I wouldn't be able to tell him what I feel. Indeed, sometimes when I find myself in light, sunny nature and think of my feelings at the Communion I feel strange, as if it was a dream, a mysterious, strange, beautiful dream, some feeling, some atmosphere which I do not have now, but when I am enveloped in that feeling I forget all, there is something that pulls me, pulls me irresistibly, one prayer leads to another, a desire, a yearning, a constant striving, so that I must use force to stop myself from striving there. The whole life is one beautiful and great secret!

Review of the book Gösta Berling by Selma Lagerlöf

I read the first book about *Gösta Berling*. Lagerlöf is no genius. A woman of warm feelings, a refined noble woman, a real ideal woman. *Gösta Berling* is a book for people who desire warmth and feelings. Who are seeking a novel in a Bruntière's sense, let them go to Balsac. *Gösta* is a *Märchenroman*²¹², a very particular literary style which until now I have not read.

(Here follows a brief content of the novel and its analysis)

Banja Luka, Saturday night, 31 December 1915 / 1 January 1916 – (19 years)

To start with:²¹³

Offer me your hand that I can lift
This stooped body and the ill spirit.
Full of humble prayer, until a great pain
Obscures the hope that your voice declares
And trembling I yearn. *Verlaine, Sagesse*

patriot, the communists sentenced him to death at a show trial and he was shot in 1947 in Banja Luka together with Feliks Niedzielski. He was a close friend of Ivan Merz whom he often mentions in his Diary. Their correspondence has been preserved and is in the possession of the Ivan Merz Archive.

²¹² A fairytale novel

²¹³ At the beginning of this part of the Diary – in the night from 1915 to 1916 - Merz takes as his motto a verse in French, from Verlaine's collection *Sagesse* (Wisdom). Apparently, the poem found reflection in his soul and the feelings which he had at that time.

Dr. Maraković and his unrealized love

My life is odd. I work and I don't work. As you look at it! I took upon myself more than I can complete, so I completed nothing. Even with the best of intentions I couldn't do all that – going here, there, occupying myself with this and that. We are human and are too much attached to the environment.

I spent the evening with Ljubo. We were at Nada's, and then we went to Šlarafija. All boring. But, in the coffee room Ljubo read aloud his novel. I quite liked some things, but I will come back to it later when I get the manuscript into my hands. Along with that he confided to me the history of his love. A true romantic love, stuff that novels full of true poetry are made of. Only a religious person could have experienced something like that. And there he is! He dreams of winter nights. He saw her at a concert once and never more. Three years have passed, and he somehow came upon her, found out her name, even visited her in her apartment. They exchanged letters. Her mother was in accord; but she was still reserved (in an upper-class manner!) and her father sent her to university. As far as I can see she is studying in Vienna. This is the structure of the story, but the details are full of flowers and various other elegant gestures.

Banja Luka, Monday, 3 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review of the drama about Prince Marko by Ante Benešić

Benešić's *Prince Marko* left no impression on me at all. It is obvious that he wanted to create a dramatic character, so we find him in battle with a rather strong antagonist: Vuk Branković. This is convenient; a severe fight ensues, where the main protagonist shows all his ethical strength, as well as his guilt. (...)

(Here follows a presentation of this drama, its contents and numerous quotations which illustrate Marko's character)

Meeting with painter Bocarić and his works

Today I was with Gustika in Bocarić's atelier. He works with a peculiar technique, as if with threads. When I asked him which of the great painters works in a similar way, he said Segantini. True, but there are not so many tones in Segantini. He must work really hard. He tells us that he closes his eyes and passes with a brush until he gets what he wanted. Yes, from close up his works are just some lines, but they give a different impression when seen from a distance. However, I think he is exaggerating in this, because there ought to be at least some contours. It is obvious that he is very ambitious. He studies the lines of the scarves, and the like. He possesses various female folk costumes and works according to them. He drew our attention to the beauties of folk weaving and to some things that the Indians wear even today. It is interesting! I told him to illustrate history, to reproduce in color some old motifs which could not have been produced before. Violet color does not exist in Bosnia at all. It is difficult, I know, nothing is preserved, but one ought to try.

Banja Luka, Tuesday, 4 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review and a critical comment on Selma Lagerlöf's novel Gösta Berling

It is a new species: an evolution from the fable toward the novel, relying heavily on the epos. (...) When I read the work, I got a hugely great epic impression. The work should have been called *Wermlandy*. The ambition of the poet was first of all to portray her people with all its virtues and vices. Everything takes place in a village, the persons

we meet are mostly peasants, although the chief heroes are the noblemen. The story takes place around 1820. *Gösta Berling* is a historic village novel which in its extensiveness represents a modern glorification of the people, and in its technique and evolution it was created from the fable. (...)

(Here follows an extensive presentation of the content of the work, critical analysis of the characters and their messages, etc.)

Salutation to the stars and the universe

Little stars, my dear little stars, scattered so beautifully in the sky, I almost forgot that you exist; you, worlds, abysses, the immeasurable! How quickly one forgets the eternity! Night is a real day: only then can one search for Him.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 6 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

He attended a party

I came from a party given by the white Sisters of Mercy²¹⁴. Miss Oberhofer has something of Mona Lisa in her face.

Banja Luka, Friday, 7 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Dilemmas about love, sensuality, human nature, asks himself what is “good”

I know very well that love is a law of nature strongly connected to refined sensuality, but still I keep looking for female company. I hold delicate conversations with Miss Vlašić (I remind her of yesterday's dance, I tell her to get married and the palpitations will stop and other things), I look at Miss Oberhofer, I almost flirt with her (it is terrible when I pronounce that word, it is followed by a thought that I perceive her as something different than myself, I almost take her as an animal because certainly there is nothing spiritual in it, and the relationship between a husband and a wife should be spiritual!). Oh, unfortunate nature! I mock myself when I think I might fall in love; indeed, this is a weakness – to seek female company. But then, what is nature? This is necessary for the preservation of the human species. I would almost say “ouch” when I think that I am an animal. But still, a great Design reigns everywhere in nature. So, it must be good. Ah, who would know what is good! There is a fear of falling into intellectual shallowness, into sensuality, and then it is a terrible weakness to seek a woman. Why doesn't she seek me? Indeed, maybe she does, but covertly! This is how it is. But anyhow, I will try as much as I can – I know that I will fail – to wrestle my way from this impulse: love. Shall I be unfaithful to myself? I believed that the female element has played out its role in my life and I thought that the eternal in me will crystallize, and I am seeking a new, living female ideal?!

The image of the Sistine Madonna is always in front of me.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ The Sisters of Mercy had a high school in Banja Luka and from time to time they organized entertainment for their female pupils. Miss Oberhofer was a girl whom Merz especially noticed at that party but he also mentions her elsewhere in his Diary.

²¹⁵ Here Merz does not refer to the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, but to Raphael's painting of the *Sistine Madonna*, which got her name after the monastery of St. Sixtus in Piacenza which had ordered it. Merz already wrote about it in his Diary entry of 18 January 1915. This image was a special inspiration for him in his strivings for moral purity.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 9 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Remembering Greta and battle with sensuality

I glanced at Greta's picture again. I feel terrible. I think that, if she was alive, I would leave the entire world for her. Strange thing – life. On the one hand, I yearn for love, and again I know that I love her more than anyone else and that I will never be able to love again in such a sincere, childish manner. I am already torn by the ideas of the centuries which criticize every act and every hint. Always there is this great fear that I might become sensual. Unwittingly, a man always feels his weakness; whatever one is speaking about, no matter how elevated, with a girl, without thinking the sensuality creeps in. It is terrible. I shouldn't even approach a girl out of fear that unwillingly a bit of this bodily instinct appears. This humiliates her and myself as well. When will I be so strong to be naive and sincere like a child?!

Enthusiastic about Verlaine's verses about love

Love as in Verlaine is real love. These are the most beautiful dreams, pure, unsensual, love dreams: the eternal-female draws us to herself. Well done, Verlaine! You hit my soul!

(Here Merz quotes in French the verses about love of the poet Verlaine from his poems *Wish*, *Isn't it so* and *My familiar dream*. In these verses, he found himself and they resounded in his inner world)

From the poem "Wish"

O for a woman in love, tender and mild,
Sweet, pensive, dark, and always astonished,
Who now and then kisses your brow like a child.

From the poem "Isn't it so?"

Is it not so? We'll go, gaily, slowly, on the modest
Road that reveals to us Hope smiling,
Whether we're seen or ignored, ever careless.

The poem "My familiar dream"

I often have this dream, strange, penetrating,
Of a woman, unknown, whom I love, who loves me,
And who's never, each time, the same exactly,
Nor, exactly, different: and knows me, is loving.
Oh how she knows me, and my heart, growing
Clear for her alone, is no longer a problem,
For her alone: she alone understands, then,
How to cool the sweat of my brow with her weeping.
Is she dark, blonde, or auburn? – I've no idea.
Her name? I remember it's vibrant and dear,
As those of the loved that life has exiled.
Her eyes are the same as a statue's eyes,
And in her voice, distant, serious, mild,
The tone of dear voices, those that have died.

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 12 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Critical review and analysis of the novel Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert

I read the Croatian translation. When I started reading the work, a question arose in me whether it is allowed to present these things. I read therefore with a reserve. But when I noticed that Flaubert is historically objective, even more so than Balsac, I realized that he had to present all this in order to describe the soul of a female type such as Mrs. Bovary. Those love scenes presented by a certain impressionism could, of course, have a negative influence on an uneducated reader; actually, such things shouldn't be presented with a classical precision because they could become disgusting. We know, after all, that we are people made of disgusting meat! But, honor is due to Flaubert: he was resolving an artistic problem and he resolved it brilliantly. The technique of the work itself is excellent and it should by all means be studied. The outer form of the work is the life of Charles Bovary. Or, better to say, he is a background on which Madame Bovary is painted. (...)

In order to technically evaluate a literary work, it is important to focus on the end. Does it satisfy us ethically? It does, completely. There could have been no other kind of end. Mrs. Bovary became an adulterer and she pushed her husband into utter poverty. Therefore, she could have repented. Her husband would have forgiven her for sure. But, it would be an absurdity to go on living with an adulterer. (...) Her nature was not religious in any deeper sense. She had to depart from this world. She killed herself. The poet pushed her into insanity, desperation, and in a moment of abnormality she poisoned herself. And then the holy Mysteries reconciled her with us. On her face a kind of remorse was visible, a gladness that she is getting rid of this passing dust; actually, she looked at her husband with completely different eyes. She saw his love. Therefore, *Madame Bovary* is a technical masterpiece of the healthy realism. Objectivity is historical, but it is not photographic. (...)

(Here follows a very extensive presentation of the content and a critical analysis of the work and its characters from the literary-artistic point of view and a comparison with the writers Maupassant, Goncourt and Turgenev)

Banja Luka, Friday, 14 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

A description of Strindberg's bad character

In *Westermans Monatshefte* I read an article on Strindberg.²¹⁶ He seems to be a kind of futurist – here I remember my conversation with Uzelac – who wants to fully develop his individuality, even in an artificial way by means of alcohol. For him morals don't exist, only instinct. He has a rough temper, but of course, his character is completely decadent, ill, which all manifests itself in intellectual convulsions, leading him all the way to insanity. (...) It was a terrible thing for him to feel the mercy of others. He hated such persons merely to avoid being dependent on them. I think Strindberg emerged from a Nietzschean milieu. This is the fruit of an extreme egoism which refuses to humble itself before anything, even nature. (...)

²¹⁶ Johan August STRINDBERG (1849–1912), Swedish writer, [painter](#) and photographer. One of the best known Swedish authors with almost seventy volumes of collected works. He is thought to be one of the creators of modern theatre.

Happiness of family life; anticipates its short duration

I feel well at home. To express myself better: almost never has there been so much satisfaction, such harmony and contentment as there is now. Mom is always smiling and caressing me. Dad reads seriously, but after the newspapers or Dorian whom he is reading now, he always says something nice. The financial situation is good. I can freely say, it is almost an ideal picture of family life. I fear it will not last long. Something comes and everything passes, everyone goes his own way. Death comes or something else.

Nagging thoughts about the essence of life and the world

As a matter of fact, I am a little bit bored here. After all, I am not a machine. I play and read; there is no goal in front of me. Not a day passes, as a matter of fact not an hour, without those nagging thoughts about the essence of life and the world and similar things. Factually I believe firmly, though rather theoretically, but still I wonder at everything. Here, outside of my window there is the sunlit alley, and a universe behind it, and I live, and think – all in that manner. The Earth is turning, there is a war, history and this is not mere imagination, it all exists, it is real. And I always ask myself what is real. The reason knows; but the heart is always surprised. And when the heart enters into the mystical realm, it feels the magical thirst which is becoming stronger the closer it is to the Source, or rather, an intimation of the Source, and when one walks, one wonders at it all. Life is a mystery.

Combatting arrogance, desire to be humble

In addition to all that, there is that arrogance, the devilish arrogance in human nature. I am ready to confess my sins to myself, but when others mention them to me, I get angry instead of being thankful. That striving for the religious reform of the world is more a striving to be even more arrogant. I can be proud because I know what the truth is. But here there is always the thought of a triumph, and how I am going to be right in the end; whereas, I should step upon myself and bow down and admit that nothing of it is my own achievement, I am merely obeying the Truth which has triumphed. I ought to humble myself often, and only then I will be in my rightful place. In such cases the opinions of people should be despised.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 15 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of Goncourt's story La courtisane

Faguet says: the Goncourt brothers must have been realists, because they could count on and present exclusively what they saw. He goes on to say that their taste sought the bizarre. In this little story that I read I saw that they are very much immersed in the decadent spirit. It is a good cultural-historical image of the 18th century. A rococo river in which a woman and gallantry played a role for itself. Everything takes place in that light and gallant rococo tone without a deeper meaning; even today this is the preferred reading of the baronesses and other easy-going aristocracy. (...)

(Here follows the presentation of the content of this story and critical review)

Banja Luka, Monday, 17 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of Valreas's novel Maman Simone

This is a novelette which is all about solving one social problem. It reminds me strongly of Heyse (*The Prodigal Son*). The only interesting thing in this novel is the content. It emerges from the period of naturalism and we can say that the content itself is naturalistic. This is a piece of writing without artistic value; the content would be appropriate for an Ibsen-type tragedy which would be a homily to the fathers.

(Here follows the presentation of the content and a critical analysis of the novel)

Montenegro loses its freedom for the first time

My soul is cheerful. Montenegro has capitulated. She did the right thing. Why should so many people die in vain? Nikita saw that Entente deceived him. Montenegrins are a heroic nation, full of moral strength. Never until now did they lose their freedom. This is the first time. This peace is a true finger of God which wants a nation still healthy in itself to be preserved. *Laudetur Dominus.*

Banja Luka, Tuesday, 18 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of the novel Mademoiselle de Camargo by Theodor de Banville

A rather romantic novel; can be classified into the literature from the 1700s where they describe love in a subjective novel. By all means, not a great work. (...)

(Here follows a brief content and critique of the work)

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 19 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of the story La vie et mort d'une danseuse by Catulle Mendès

A short story from the theatre life. Not some great work. A twelve-year old dancer danced, went through all kinds of adventures in her life, in many cities, in order to finally grow old and end up begging and dancing to an accordion. She died poor, and her escort after her funeral was arrested due to theft. (...)

(Here follows the review of the content and critique of the story)

Walk and conversation with a girl named Vikta, analysis of love feelings

I had a walk with Vikta. We lead strange conversations as if we were on the road of falling in love. I didn't want to work and I went to see her, without acknowledging that I was seeking her. It's a torment for me; it seems stupid to lead such conversations which make no sense. One could try to penetrate the soul and investigate the strange female psyche. But, how does one begin? When I am beside her, I am as if obsessed by something, as if under a suggestion, and I speak in the same tone; no matter how hard I try for something more serious, I cannot think of it. And then that devilish desire for kisses... I don't understand it at all; this is sensuality. All right, let us assume that I love her spiritually, but I am not aware of this spiritual element in her in the least. She is honest, but she got this more from her upbringing, than from philosophical conviction. And she is good and diligent. But so are the others. Maybe I am not thinking of her because there was no one else toward whom I could feel the same. The first feeling toward Greta must have been the same; only at that time I was untouched by culture and simply drew the consequences of that love. I cannot do the same here. She is dear to me, but maybe this is only a feeling based on a veiled sensual foundation. If there had been someone else toward whom I could be so free, maybe I would have felt the same. As for the kisses, I am already far away from them; in general, I would never admit to myself that I love. This will not be able to evolve to the point of love because I analyze too much and shy away from everything carnal; therefore, love must die.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 20 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Comparison of the old and new novels with respect to the inner life of characters

A modern novel is greatly different from the old one. The old one (Zola, Maupassant) presents ordinary people who live mostly by instinct, without inner struggles,

still untouched by new philosophical ideas. The new novel starts with Turgenev (*Fathers and children*), continuing with Dostoevsky, Hamsun, Strindberg, partly Wilde and Sienkiewicz. Here people are presented who do not live instinctively any more, but are permeated with ideas of their age, analyze, search in a Faustian manner and do not go through any feeling instinctively. *Fathers and children* are the most classical example. Compared to the realism of this work even Maupassant seems a romantic; in him love is instinctive, there is no inner struggle, and this is not real any in a modern sense.

Banja Luka, Sunday, 23 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

A critical analysis of his inner life, desire for humility

I would love to be humble! Very humble! To destroy all this inborn arrogance and strive for truth in a humble way for the sake of truth itself, not thinking of what the people did or read and to be modern in that way. I seek a deep, thorough education, and not a magnitude of read books. Still, I am very dissatisfied and sad. I know it shouldn't be like that.

I even received Communion today; for those few moments in the church I was more than happy, and even more so when I found myself able to delve to an extent into this mystery. But, soon after that a mood of dissatisfaction flooded over me; maybe it is because I am going through some strange fight which I am not fully aware of. I am slowly renouncing the self-assurance which was present in me, and with a huge effort I am getting closer and closer to Christian notions. As I do so I perceive many things which were wrong in me. Actually, I still lack basic philosophical (ethical) principles. Bilogrivić²¹⁷ warned me of many things, and when I argue with him, I see already in advance that he is right; not because he is more gifted by nature, but because he thinks in terms of premises which were pondered over by the centuries. I see that I am wrong in many things; if one wants to introduce everything into the grandiose Catholic logical system, everything (both generally and specifically my interpretation of the *Song of Songs from the Bible*) could be understood differently than what the Holy Fathers say. The Church is absolute in that; it prevents every individuality. It is right in doing so because cells must be subjected to a higher unit; but these various interpretations are not so clear to my heart (they are to the mind, though) and their consequences still seem a bit sophisticated to me. But, I gather that I will be able to delve more into this matter later.

Doubts and vacillations in faith, self-analysis and self-criticism, ineptness in conversation, life is a riddle to him

When I think of how I handle myself in a conversation, I seem so strange and terribly childish. If others were speaking like I do, I would think of them as being naive children. But, I must speak, and if I wanted to express my deeper convictions, I would have to remain silent. All of life is such a riddle, the greatest sphynx, so that I am not able to confirm affirmatively, even from the deepest levels of my mind, or from the theoretical point of view the simplest axioms of life (at the same time I am a practicing Catholic in body and soul). But maybe it is different (the heart says this, not the reason), maybe everything else is a prejudice according to which people think and judge. There has been such a multitude of thought which people have spelled out from Christ to Nietzsche, Arshbashev, so contradictory that one unwittingly doubts in one's mind, although one knows that Christ is the Truth. Like Kranjčević, I feel as if the entire mankind converged into the cerebellum. I admire people who are convinced of their principles – even if they are wrong; still, I seem childish to myself, although in a conversation I act as if I were

²¹⁷ Merz's friend in Banja Luka, student of theology Nikola Bilogrivić. See biography in footnote of 27 March 1915

beyond doubt, as if I were some semi-god unwaveringly convinced in the power of my thoughts, as if I could destroy and knock down everything with a single word.

It is best to keep silent, because one could scandalize the souls which believe firmly. God be with them.

I still don't know myself. I know that by some philosophical speculation I could arrive at immoral conclusions and theories of life; at the same time, I would never be immoral myself, actually I despise and shrink from immoral people.

Banja Luka, Tuesday, 25 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Criticizes immoral contents in Maupassant's work Une vie

Spiritual fights are not over yet. The extremes of my intellectual life are characterized by the works I read: First Epistle to Thessalonians by St. Paul and Maupassant's *Une vie*.

The latter work is very characteristic of naturalism. But, I still cannot form an objective attitude towards it; if I could, my problem of love, sensuality, nudes and the like would be solved. However, I felt that the impact of this novel on us, ordinary, weak people, and especially young people is evil. We know what is going on inside a marriage and an immensely moral man (my Zarathustra to whom I bow!) can read the most detailed descriptions of various marital acts without feeling any excitement. But, such people are few in number and I hold that Maupassant himself – although in this work he is photographically objective – wouldn't feel much different from us. The question is therefore – is one allowed to describe these acts? I say, no! (Goethe himself would grow silent if it came to that). But, in this work what was said was unavoidable for the character of the work. I ask myself again, is this art or a simple photography of life? As far as I am concerned, I would separate the two or classify the latter into scientific literature. Here I would also place Zola, and many others (Dostoevsky, etc.). I will not draw all the conclusions until I have read the work to the end.

I'm in a friendly contact with Vikta; we can discuss various, even discreet issues. I am still not over my conversations with her. We mostly speak about love, about the female ideal, desire for kisses, about love which for various reasons must either awaken or die.

Banja Luka, Friday, 28 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Criticizes his weakness, feels the need for a spiritual and moral perfecting, the first draft of spiritual decisions

I am somehow calm in my soul; but still I see that I am at a great distance from any form of perfection. I am thinking now of relative perfection – to be better than one's environment. This causes a great pain in me. I fancy myself being a good example, but I see that I am a Christian only in my words, not in deeds. Christianity has not yet entered my bloodstream. There is nothing harder than to be a good Christian. (It was easy for the stoics and others). Gusti reproaches me – with justification – that I am arrogant, ruthless. I indeed am like that and I will try to become as gentle, as humble as I possibly can. Oh God, I just don't know how to achieve that. In addition to the above, I eat a lot at my home, I get up late, I don't do physical exercise. This entire life is contrary to my wishes. Weakness, weakness and eternal weakness.

I should pray longer in order not to lose that mystical connection with God, to feel him in every thought, in every glance and in my work. As it is now, I say my prayers in the morning and in the evening, in fact my thoughts mechanically repeat the sacred words. I should read the Gospel at least half an hour daily, reflect on those words, then at noon

and during the Hail Mary²¹⁸ to visualize some transcendental content and so the whole day long, to spend the entire life in that mystical light, making a masterpiece of my soul and seeking the Truth – Purpose.²¹⁹

My eyes are weak, I cannot read so much and I would gladly delve into natural sciences. I lost my connection with nature too. I almost said “damned books”.

I found nice verses by Prudhomme.²²⁰ One ought to study him on account of his philosophy:

Caressing is only a restless fervor

A fruitless attempt of poor love

which strives to achieve the impossible unity of souls through the bodies.

You, poor people, you are separated and alone like corpses

tormented by the kiss.

From the collection *Les Solitudes*, Poem *Les caresses*

Banja Luka, Sunday, 30 January 1916 – (19 years and 1 month)

Feels exhausted and a victim of other people's opinions, looks forward to a time of renewed enthusiasm, work and ideals

Where is my youth? I feel so old, so worn out. When could I fall in love?! When could I get excited over something, without meticulous analyzing?! Oh, we modern people, we are terrible. We grow old before our time. If I could only shake off all the books, all these foreign, poisoned opinions and live naturally and good as God has created us.

I think that once again the time of enthusiasm will open itself to me, the time of work, socializing, full of ideals and friendships. If only this unfortunate war was over and our entire cultural life started again.

Banja Luka, Saturday, 5 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Compares Maupassant with writers who describe love and corporeality

It will be rather hard for me to give an objective account of *Une vie*. The reason lies in the fact that for the first time I found a description of sensual acts and on the other hand Maynial's monograph about Maupassant is hugely biased. Here the development of his illness is described in detail and not a word is said about his sexual life which could explain a lot of things in his works. And then, in this monograph, he is not placed where he rightly belongs in the evolution of literature. (...)

(In the continuation Merz names several of the most important French writers, giving his judgements on them from the point of view of description of love scenes in their works.)

Maupassant's description of love and corporeality are irreconcilable with real art

Does this Maupassant's work, *Une vie*, make a positive impact? No, the descriptions of those sensual acts do not fall within the range of the artistic. Art should raise us into a higher world, fill us with enthusiasm. We should enjoy in it. But, let's say that a poet says

²¹⁸ Evening prayer, The Angelus

²¹⁹ This is the first draft of the program of spiritual life which Merz compiled for his moral perfection. However, everything is still on the level of wishful thinking and in the conditional: “I ought to”. He feels seriously what he should do in the area of his spirituality. This program will assume more serious contours on 5 February 1918 when, during his time in the battle lines, Merz will put together serious decisions for his spiritual life. Later in Paris, and then in Zagreb these decisions will be perfected more and more, becoming concrete and more demanding. Already here the presence of God's grace is visible in his soul, the grace which motivated him from the inside to such a serious spiritual and ascetic life.

²²⁰ French poet [René-François SULLY PRUDHOMME](#), 1839–1907.

that here is a social problem which he had to paint in this manner. Here we have a sentimental girl, full of flowery hopes. She yearns for love. Good! A young man comes along and they kiss. It is objectively described and we don't know in advance whether this is a real, sincere, unselfish love between the two. They get married. The poet leads us into their bedroom... Here we feel for the first time that on his part this is only sensual love and that she has felt it instinctively at this moment. This is a fact. We have a presentiment that this marriage will not be a happy one. No, Maupassant shouldn't have brought this image in front of our eyes. Those kisses in Corsica and their conversations which reveal nothing deep on his side are enough... We see that this description wasn't necessary. But the question is why shouldn't it be described? After all, they were married and their acts were not sinful; this is the daily bread of marriage. Precisely because this is the daily bread it shouldn't be the subject matter of art. Everybody would be shocked if a poet wrote poems to a cake, beans or other food; one would immediately say that this is not poetry, that it doesn't touch upon the inner life, that this is merely for the purpose of the survival of our bodies. There is a poem dedicated to wine. This is the limit. But, wine is not glorified because it pleases our palate, but because it acts upon the soul, takes us into some new psychic world, making us cheerful, enthusiastic. It can be lethal, and this lethal action of wine, the glorification of drinking and its consequences we find only in decadent poems (*folk poems from Srem!*). For the same reason for which a cake and beans are not the subject matter of poetry, the marital acts do not fall within the scope of art. They are completely bodily, serve the procreation of mankind and satisfy bodily pleasures, without anything spiritual. This is not a matter for art, and social problems should be beautifully resolved without it.

Art shouldn't photograph ordinary life

And what happens with a kiss? This is something like wine to me. It is a yearning for the unity of souls; it can excite and can be borrowed as such for artistic purposes (the first kiss in *Hernani!*). But here too, one should be extremely careful. Goethe himself puts the kiss into verse, but when it comes to the marital act (*Brautnacht*), he, being sensual, closes his eyes. And Maupassant here gave an entire codex of sensual life. Here we have passionate kisses, acts, malthusianisms. It is completely wrong to think that an entire life is *kunstfähig*²²¹. This would destroy the entire meaning of art. It is an axiom that only the beautiful is the subject matter of art and this shouldn't be touched. Morals must also be respected. Art mustn't photograph things as Maupassant does. Because if it were so, people wouldn't need to read novels; let them go out into the world and look at novels with their own eyes... Many scenes from his works should be left out and only then could we read this great romantic writer with pleasure. (...)

Maupassant strived to describe the life of a woman as it truly is. Along with that, the psychology of a misfortunate female soul, her dreams, failed expectations, death of the husband, upbringing of a son and return. We can almost say that *Une vie* is an apotheosis of pain. This motif is as old as the beginnings of French realism: a woman who is unhappy in marriage. Presumably, this motif was elaborated already in the 18th century in a decadent, refined culture such as the French... The work is a naturalistic novel which portrays the entire life with poetry and prose, with sensuality and brutality. (...)

(Here follows an extensive account of the contents and a comment on this work, psychological analysis of its characters, comparison with other French writers who deal with similar topics in their literary artistic works)

²²¹ German: fit to be a work of art

Banja Luka, Saturday, 10 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Thoughts and comments after reading Lord of the World by Robert Hugh Benson

(Merz firstly gives his extensive literary comment about various kinds of literary works, going back into history, with an emphasis on epic poems and novels and, comparing their development, mentions earlier and contemporary writers. Then he briefly summarizes the content of the work)

(...) We praised Benson, but we ought to say sincerely that he has a number of drawbacks. We are fascinated by that great epoch which he very logically and philosophically interpreted, but many of the characters do not satisfy us. Mabel for instance. He should have presented that huge inner struggle in stronger terms, the struggle between doubt and faith, which people have been going through from Cain to this day, and which at this particular moment is most decisive. He should have presented (at least impressionistically) the colossal amount of freemasonic arguments which burden a Christian (scientific and other), in order to understand his great spiritual struggle in which his faith is preserved in spite of everything. Only with this can we understand the psychology of that great Christian heroism. Those martyrdoms for the Crucified Christ are admirable, but we would be even more satisfied to meet at least one person of this character who is fully modern, who knows all the attacks of the freemasons on Christianity and who accepted the sacrifice.

Banja Luka, 13 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Continuation of the review and analysis of The Lord of the World and its characters

(Here he gives an account about the creation of a literary work which cannot be fixated by laws because it is the fruit of the writer's individuality, environment and epoch in which it was created. After comparison with the French, Merz speaks about the approach to English literary works)

(...) Therefore, when we analyze an English literary work, we usually pay more attention to the issue of ideas, to the moralizing point. The same is true for Benson. We already stressed the impressionistic, cinematographic technique. The structure of this novel seems at first to be divided into two parts. We have here a Catholic representative and his exchange with the freemasons. This, the formal side of the work, is rather bad. It seems, namely, that Oliver (the freemason) and Percy (Catholic) are some kind of key protagonists. In effect, neither of them is a key protagonist, both of them are only means by which the writer leads us into the spiritual milieu of both worlds. (...) Here we come upon Percy's religious life; prayers, mystical ecstasies are particularly beautifully presented. Benson could have described Percy's religious life, because he himself is religious. (...) In my opinion, Benson left out one important factor of sinfulness: sensuality. It is precisely this factor which is important for man – the outlaw, and freemasons here do not sin against sensuality (at least we don't know that). A man from the age of the Antichrist will be excessively sensual which he will try to justify philosophically too.



Ivan with his father during holidays in Banja Luka 1915.

Events before the end of the world in Benson's novel

Now we ought to come to the key feature of the work: the philosophical one. It is its foremost feature; everything else is merely a means to emphasize this philosophical issue. The writer keeps to Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians where he says that the man of sin will come only when the great apostasy occurs. This is a historical fact, only it must be applied to the future. Along with that there are a couple of thoughts more from the Scriptures and several prophecies. The rest of the spiritual milieu Benson had to construct taking into account modern circumstances. This is freemasonry which rejects every transcendental religion, adores the human mind, and its practical tool is humanism as a consequence of reason. This is the basic idea and it is completely true. Having reached a high level due to science, man imagines himself to be able to resolve the ultimate questions of life. By crossbreeding the generations, a superman should have developed who unifies in himself all the features of scientific mankind. This is Antichrist. We see him only in certain moments; we don't know his past, at first glance he is beyond mistakes. A diplomat who reconciles the East with the West and becomes the Lord of the whole world. As an ideal representative of mankind, he is given divine honor. Oliver is a diplomat, a freemason. He is married to Mabel. The Pope Angelicus founded the Order of the Crucified Christ on the advice of Percy Franklin. Percy becomes a Pope in Nazareth. Catholicism is sentenced to death. The last abode of the Pope is found due to treachery and at the moment when aircraft are circling over Nazareth, the end of the world comes.

Banja Luka, Thursday, 24 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Relativity of enjoyment in art which is a great egoist

The bad mood is over. I cannot say that I am completely happy and contented, but there are no more desperate thoughts and feelings. As far as I can remember, I was desperate due to my own human limitations. I fancied that I am more valuable than the rest of my environment, dream about my role in life, but objectively speaking, my own death or the death of a maid in Normandy is just the same. Along with that, I suffered from my immense one-sidedness. All right, I am pretty knowledgeable in literature. But, what is literature? It doesn't even satisfy me. Isn't this art also a kind of self-deception? There are so many natural sciences, social sciences and others, and who can persuade me that each one of them is less valuable than the science of the arts?! Maybe they are even more valuable. Art is a great egoist; it delights only the person involved in it, while other sciences can offer direct help. Maybe I am wrong: these thoughts could be the consequence of the fact that I have been reading a lot of non-artistic stuff lately. In these

books, there was no poetry of Chateaubriand, Hugo or Brentan and Eichendorf. The division of poetry from non-poetry in Maupassant and others like him was a hugely painful task. It is undoubtedly a great mission of a literary historian to recommend good books and distinguish the good from the evil.

Loves silence, peace, prayer, adores the Eucharist

I would like to prepare myself properly for confession. This might be my last.²²² Of course, I do not live in such an environment where my mistakes would become apparent due to struggle, but still I have a presentiment of a number of things. And then, I am still in disagreement with Thomas à Kempis. He always says: *turbam declinare* (avoid the human multitude) and *de solitudine* (about solitude), etc. He demands that we stay away from the world. I love silence very much, I love peace where I can think, think of the mystery of the Eucharist, to fall into motionless admiration, I can pray for a long time. But all of that is strain, spiritual work, and one needs rest. This rest is found in society, if one cannot go into nature.

Let us take then a social worker. His duty is to approach all classes, the good and evil, and study life. Sincerely speaking, I am glad when, in the company of some friend, I can escape lustful glances of immature girls and when I don't have to look at pretty ladies who march modestly, and passing by a good-looking man they tremble with passion. They are visible through and through. I prefer to eschew this company, not to look at the poisoned flirtation by the officers and other... it is more beautiful in solitude, it is more beautiful to retire into a dark chapel and, with the glimmering of the eternal light silently pray the rosary and admire, eternally admire the Eucharist, the glow, the greatness, the unspeakable Love...

Social sensitivity for the poor

Still, one ought to see it all, one ought to crawl into the most despicable houses and study those miserable people who need help the most, more than all the materially poor. How is one to help them – a difficult question – possibly by self-education? I noticed, namely, that there are some secret fibers – mysteries! – which, in accordance with the moral power of a man, act on his environment, even when he keeps completely silent. A classic example is St. Francis who folded his arms inside his sleeves and humbly, just walking, preached. This comes first, everything else is secondary.²²³

Review and critique of the poems Flowers of Evil by Charles Baudelaire

I read Baudelaire: *Flowers of Evil*. A choice of poems. He has a lot of brutality inside himself. He takes pleasure in delving into such things. I cannot say that I found something immoral in him, but his taste is terribly ill, decadent.

He is the last powerful representative of decadency in lyrics; after him, regeneration according to Verlaine comes. (...)

(Here follows a detailed analysis and critique of Baudelaire's poems)

Along with all the ill instinct which makes Baudelaire great, here is his unhappy soul. His grievances resound in us, his reflections on nature, his sad loves. This is the modern soul, unreligious and therefore unhappy. A true representative of our materialistic age which took away all poetry, the time of Hamlet, Nagal and Baudelaire. Yes, a modern

²²² In four days Ivan is going into the army, and then to the battlefield. From this sentence, we conclude that he takes the prospect of being killed very seriously. Some of his colleagues and acquaintances have already lost their lives.

²²³ Numerous witnesses testified, even in writing, that Merz, especially when he returned from the studies in Paris, appeared spiritual, emanating sanctity; some said that in his presence they felt a real presence of God (Cardinal Franjo Šeper, Servant of God Marica Stanković and others).

man is full of modern ideas, full of knowledge which gathered in his small head, and he is unhappy. That's why he says: "I have more memories than if I had been living for a thousand years." His brilliant verses from *Spleen* characterize in the best way this consequent, packed, modern soul which lives without anything supernatural and therefore must be bored with life and must be scared in the face of anything unknown.

(Here follow the quotations from Spleen LXXVI and LXXVIII and comparisons with other poets and contents of their works)

Banja Luka, Friday, 25 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Compares Baudelaire with Verlaine and Musset

Baudelaire is a romantic by content, a Parnassian by form. Along with that, he represents a huge leap towards symbolism. It is seen clearly that he doesn't think in verses, but a thought comes into his mind, and then he starts to elaborate on it. A poem very characteristic of him is *Le recueillement*. Here one sees that there is no real spontaneous lyric inspiration as in Musset, but some symbolic vagueness in which the poet himself doesn't know what is happening to him. True, the feelings are vague. But if we think of Verlaine's symbolism, from that vagueness we derive the same feeling, while in Baudelaire this suggestive music is missing. (...)

(Here follow the chosen verses from the above poem)

Banja Luka, Saturday, 26 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Pessimism – characteristic of lyrics of Baudelaire's age

I can freely state that after Hugo the main characteristic of lyrics is pessimism. It is a real expression of this age of materialism and lack of religion. We love these people, all their torn soul is full of poetry. There is no cheerfulness and light which twinkles and plays. No, everything is sad, the rain is pouring down, it is autumn or winter; a rainy, muddy winter.

Not all of the poems are so immensely desperate; there are some which are full of human feelings. This too is a step into the French literature. The romantics mostly chose romantic motifs of unsatisfied love, full of exaggerated subjectivism. (...) There is a poem by Baudelaire which expresses the unconscious striving of a modern non-religious man for faith. This is *Les aveugles*. They walk in eternal darkness and look for the sky. He compares himself to them and asks himself: "I say: what are they looking for in the sky, all these blind men?" (...)

Banja Luka, Monday, 28 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Wants to create a masterpiece of his soul, but is still far from that goal

I intend to write a word or two before going into the army. Namely, with this I am completing this diary with which I wanted to cultivate my interior and make my soul into a masterpiece. I feel I am still enormously far from that goal, that I am still like a child who doesn't know what life is, this secret of indeterminate struggle; the struggle which seeks its bread and as soon as it reaches this goal it becomes even fiercer because, by thinking, man comes into conflict with the prejudices of centuries, with contradictions in his own nature and the evil spirit who is laughing ironically in this whole process, who suppresses all poetry, every feeling and destroys everything.

The Holy Communion brings him great joy

I received Communion yesterday and I am so happy and contented that it seems I will never ever be sad, in spite of difficulties. Sadness poisons the heart, invoking that spirit of despair when I ask myself why live at all, why go on further, why was I conceived at all. These lethal thoughts must depart from my head, I must perceive my weakness which says that I should not explore everything with my own head. The task of life is not to despair, but to seek harmony in it and be cheerful over the magnificence of the order. Yes, this should be an axiom: everything is for the best. And whatever misfortune may come upon us, whatever misery, keep up that thought, even without understanding “why”! People are here merely travelers, their real determination is not here on this earth; they are chosen for something higher. Indeed, when I hole up in solitude, in darkness, everything, the entire real world, all the comrades, friends, all the magnificent nature seem like a dream. It is then that I feel that it is unreal, and that thought is the real reality, that the spiritual world, the world of the night and prayer is more real than everything that visibly exists. One ought to strive only toward this life, towards this reality. Yes, I am still weak. I enjoy the Eucharist and this spiritual life, but I see that this is still nothing, that I should dive deeper and further into this vast world. Only now I understand the great Pope Pius X who expressed the desire for a frequent, as a matter of fact, daily receiving of the Lord. Only thus can one enter into that world deeper and deeper, get closer to the Lord and converse with him. I know, many intellectual tensions will come. Maybe I will even fall very low, but I trust that I will remain on the right way. Life is strange. With this I conclude my diary and sing full of joy *Gaudeamus igitur...*

Review and critique of the novel Woman Power by Gustav Geijerstam

Geijerstam’s novel is a nice thing. (...) He has a refined, detailed perception of life. The end of the novel says that pain lifts up the human soul and the author advocates the thoughts of purity and religious life. (...)

Here follows a review of the content of the novel, its analysis and critique)

Banja Luka, evening, 28 February 1916 – (19 years and 2 months)

Impressions and thoughts after parting with friends before going into the army

I still carry that noise in my head; the laughter of girls, Vikta’s advice and Ljubo’s giggling. I ask myself: am I sorry for all these people? Yes, I noticed that many of them have grown to love me. Maybe some of the womenfolk are a bit angry at me because I am kind and gentle towards them, and then I push them away from me with an icy hand. I can say that I have grown to love Vikta really nicely; we chatted a lot even about the serious issues of life, and she actually confided in me. And there it is, she is dear to me like a sister. Tender, full of beautiful female feelings, although not highly educated. Then there is Vera. With her too, there was a lot of noise, laughter and senseless words so that I felt like a child. Just like that, when I realize that I never think about these things when I am alone. There, she is dear to me, too. But, when I think of what will remain of all this. It will pass; I will forget. The ideal of an unknown girl, unknown but still so well-known hovers in front of my eyes. Along with that, the thought of Gretchen is so much alive that I cannot even think of love.

Chastity and eternal chastity should be my motto!

Who I feel most sorry about here is Dr. Rebac. We didn’t speak a lot, but everything was full of living energy, full of love and some strange, actually mystical chastity. What an effect this man has on others! I feel that even the most intelligent person couldn’t make such a strong impression on me as a chaste one. This is factual, and this confirms the truth of Christian moral principles. Chastity and eternal chastity should be my motto!

So, I lose my older friend who already did a lot and is bound to have a good impact on his people – I feel clearly that this man is governed by Providence. It's a pity for Ljubo, too; but I must be sincere in saying that I feel much more moral strength in Rebac, although I admit that Ljuba's soul is much more developed and cultivated than Rebac's. God, give us good health and everything else will follow. I only ought to find some good works for the study of the Scriptures.

"Grüs Gott, Gretchen! Vielleicht auf baldiges Wiedersehen."²²⁴



Trappist monastery "Marija Zvijezda" in Banja Luka where Ivan often went as a young man. Here he used to come to confession. Also, here he participated in the First Mass of his priest friend Nikola Bilogrivić at Christmas 1916. At that time, he was already in the army, but he got a short leave, as he mentions in the Diary of 28 December 1916. The Communist regime devastated the monastery in 1945, confiscating property and expelling numerous monks. Today, the monastery is gradually being renovated.

²²⁴ German: Good bye, little Greta, maybe we shall meet soon! This is the ending sentence of the 6th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 9 December 1915 until 28 February 1916.

IN WORLD WAR I 1916 – 1918



Ivan Merz with Father Mavro during World War I

Participation in World War I and his stay on the Italian battlefield meant a lot for Ivan and his spiritual development. Surrounded by the horrors of war, facing death on a daily basis, exposed to all kinds of suffering and self-sacrifice on the frontline, Ivan grew stronger, deepening his faith and living through a deep conversion to God. After the war, he began living a saintly life, “in the spirit of newly discovered Catholicism”, as he wrote in the Diary entry of 5 February 1918.

There were some who thought that Ivan, as they knew him during his work in Zagreb 1922 – 1928, was a product of Paris. This is not true. Ivan, as he was in the last six years of his life, was the product of a special grace of God on the frontline.

After having been drafted into the army, Ivan underwent basic military training at the beginning of March 1916 in Lebring near Graz. He spent about eight weeks there. From Lebring, he was transferred to Graz and Slovenska Bistrica for further military training. After that, he attended an officer course in Mürzzuschlag. He passed the officer exam in Graz. After that he was sent again to Lebring to the Second Bosnian-Herzegovinian Regiment. Due to hunger, he got a one-month leave which he spent in

Banja Luka, Lebring, Vienna and Pecs. In November 1916, he was sent to Seewiesen to complete a course in skiing. Here he was promoted to ski leader. From January 1917, he held a rank of cadet trainee and spent most of his time skiing on the mountains around Bolzano and Arsier. When staying near Bolzano, he was living in *Regensbürger hütte* at an altitude of 2100 m. On this part of the frontline, Ivan's task was to take companies to the battle position and back, or to transmit messages between different headquarters. Oftentimes, he would make 30 to 40 km daily on skis. When the snow melted, he was nominated postal officer because he spoke several languages. After that he was promoted to battalion adjutant, and remained in that position during the course of the offensive until the Austrian army was halted. As a lieutenant, he completed a course on battle gases in Vienna which lasted from the 3rd until 17th April 1918. Near Asiago he was assigned to reconnaissance duties. Apart from brief leaves – ten days every six months, Ivan spent the entire time, until the end of the war on the Italian battlefield.

Even during his time at the frontlines Ivan managed to find the time for reading, as is witnessed by his Diary which contains accounts on the books he read. He was reading very critically, observing his own judgments and the influence on his thinking and life in general by the works he read. A predominant thought in his mind at that time was that "life is more than art". Religion and religious life substituted literature and art as the item of the highest value in his soul. He began to judge everything, especially himself from a Christocentric point of view. In his war Diary, he revealed the psyche of a Catholic warrior; a warrior who doesn't kill, but always prays to God that he might not have to kill anybody; a warrior who, at the frontlines, suffered physically along with all the others, and underwent spiritual hunger as well. In continuous mortal danger, he kept his firm connection with God. There were various people in his company. Among the shallow and often immoral characters which surrounded him, his pleasure was to associate with prof. Ribarić. He was telling Ivan about the poet Vladimir Nazor, his works and life, and it was on Ribarić's persuasion that Ivan began studying Nazor and developed a great enthusiasm for his work.

Leads an intensive spiritual life

Although life on the front was full of self-sacrifice, pain, blood, death and every other horror of war, Ivan was lifting up his spirit continuously to God. In the midst of bodily suffering, he devoted his time to prayer, fasting, subduing of the body, strengthening of the will and receiving Holy Communion whenever the opportunity arose. Indeed, his yearning for Holy Communion was sincere and deep. He read the Bible, *The Imitation of Christ* and lives of the saints. From his immediate superior Šime Cvitanović, he borrowed in January 1917, while staying on Dosso del Fine, the booklet *Catholic in Practice* (in Croatian). During his stay in Bolzano, Ivan often visited the Franciscan Fr. Vjenceslav Barta in whom he found a great support for his spiritual effort, and who instructed him in the "secrets of systematic meditation", as Ivan once said. Ivan's Catholicism was gradually losing the cultural, political, social, esthetic connotations, becoming more and more a Catholicism of Christ, Catholicism of the soul, Catholicism of religion, Catholicism of eternal values, encompassing the being and superseding everything else from the aspect of eternity.

Ivan's war correspondence

During his time on the battlefield Ivan kept an abundant correspondence. In the first place with his parents whom he informed of his condition very often; almost every second and third day he used to send them postcards, which was the only option for a soldier, as letters closed in envelopes could not be sent. Several hundred of Ivan's postcards to his parents during war time have been preserved. On the basis of this material we can reconstruct Ivan's life on the battlefield. He also kept a lively correspondence with his

former teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković. In total, Ivan sent him 37 postcards and letters. Dr. Maraković responded with 3 letters and 16 postcards. The topics of their correspondence are literature, art and religion. It is apparent from this abundant material that Dr. Maraković was his true spiritual guide not only in the sphere of literature and arts, but also in religious matters. Especially interesting is their correspondence about Vladimir Nazor. Ivan also often wrote to his friend, Nikola Bilogrivić who was ordained a priest at the end of 1916. Merz managed to get a short leave to attend his First Mass in Banja Luka. A Diary entry about this event is preserved.

From this copious correspondence, we singled out several of Ivan's letters and included them into this edition of his Diary, placing them where they chronologically belong. These letters give us valuable data about Ivan's spiritual life which complement what is lacking in the Diary itself, and give us a rounded picture of everything he was going through on the battlefield. The entire war correspondence with parents and friends will be published in one of the following volumes of his Collected Works.

Warrior from the White Mountains and New Age

In order to get the fullest possible picture of Ivan's religious life on the battlefield, we complemented his war Diary with two very important texts, placing them where they chronologically belong. One is the text from Ivan's colleague on the battlefield Šime Lukin-Cvitanović, in which he gives an excellent account of the situation on the Italian battlefield at the beginning of 1917 and, within this framework, a description of his meeting and friendship with his subordinate officer trainee Ivan Merz. In that period of time Ivan didn't keep the Diary, and the above text fills this void. On the tenth anniversary of Ivan's death, Cvitanović published this text as an article under the title *Warrior from the White Mountains* (in Croatian) in *Hrvatska prosvjeta* No. 7/8, 1938, pp. 331-337.

The other, even more important text is Ivan's article *New Age* which was written at the beginning of 1917 on the battlefield in which Ivan summarizes all his spiritual experiences and efforts which he gained during the stay on the battlefield. He wrote about this in his letters to Dr. Maraković and his friend N. Bilogrivić. In the letter to Maraković, he stressed that this text was written "with his own blood". After the end of the war, it was published in *Luč Magazine* in 1919, and this is Ivan's first published text.

Thankful to God for the experience of war

By the end of the war Ivan wrote to Dr. Maraković and his father interesting observations in which he summarized his experiences and realizations to which he came passing through all the hardships of war:

From the letter to Dr. Maraković of 27 August 1918: "And so, I remained alive – moreover, healthy – due to the mercy of the all-embracing heavenly Father and prayers of many good friends. I really do not regret at having seen so much and having been through so many experiences because many new vistas opened for me, and I found out to a certain extent the meaning of life."

From the letter to his father of 23 August 1917 he wrote: "I am thankful to God for having participated in war, because war taught me many things which otherwise I would never know. I yearn at being free again and to align my life with what I realize to be the correct way."

DIARY

7 March 1916 – 28 December 1916

Graz, 7 March 1916 – (19 years and 3 months)²²⁵

First impressions from the military life and the new environment

I don't have enough time to ponder on everything. I will only note the facts.

Lebring is one big city in which all the barracks are lined in a row. The water is yellow and there is mud all around. Terrible for the soldiers.

Otherwise, it is rather nice here. Physical exercise does me good. The people around me are interesting. Some thin tall guy with sharp facial features always speaks about his Spanish origins (Guzman de Olivares) and the people of Gil Blas, then a small stocky teacher who is clumsier than clumsiness itself. Otherwise, a world without deeper spiritual needs; liberals.

Graz is a city unto itself, with a rather intimate German character. Women are peculiar; with their innocent looks, lowered gaze, pale rose color they remind me of the age of chivalry in Germany, of the expressions of Kriemhilde and Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser*). Real German types. There are a lot of retirees. They walk in the park, talk, stand, lean on a stick and walk again, feed the birds, etc.

Criticizes an operetta which glorifies Viennese frivolity

I saw *Walzertraum* in the theatre. A real Viennese work; expresses all the good and evil features of that frivolous city. As an operetta, it is pleasing; with many beautiful, passionate waltzes and melodies which fascinate. As a drama, it's not worth much. A rather frivolous work. (...) It glorifies Viennese frivolity. Love, kissing, embracing... with many poetic traits.



Graz – Schlossberg. It was in this city that Ivan started his military training.

²²⁵ Here begins the 7th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 7 March 1916 until 15 July 1916.

Graz, Friday, 18 March 1916 – (19 years and 3 months)

Describes the military life and environment in which he lives

I could write a lot. Most of all I could picture the milieu in which I live, without thinking about it. Not that I have forgotten anything; I simply haven't got the time. I get up at six, from the apartment I rush into the barracks. Today the morning sky was beautiful, transparent and dotted with little white clouds which made me as joyful as the birds which kept on singing. To come back to the routine. Exercises: *Schwarmlinie* in various ways: gather, disperse, storm and the like. Exercises are not strenuous, and the officers have a good manner with the soldiers. Earlier, when we practiced parade exercises we were tormented by an unintelligent corporal. It was horrible. This man knows his military stuff, he shouts and yells at us as if we were children, and what is most worrying, threatens us with some extra marches and putting us on report. Idiot, as if this frightens us. Before him there was another stubborn Bosniak who wanted to look energetic and he shouted in German in a manner at which everyone laughed. Otherwise, he is a good man, and especially interesting is his postcard to Suljić where he greets us and in which the Bosnian style with some supposedly intelligent features is reflected, such as capital letters at the beginning of a line, semi-colons, etc.

My colleagues are varied. One is a baron and morphinist who always cries and gets nausea when he hears shooting. He is simply incapable of life. He should have a baby-sitter with him. He couldn't take the exercises. I will return to the others on another occasion.

Foresees going to the front line and the possibility of death

One ought to think on one's soul. There is so much exercising that one doesn't have the time for any spiritual work. I will try to read something tomorrow and continue with the cultivation of my soul, and try to carry myself into that beautiful world of the night. This is what I need most of all at the moment.

There is high probability that I will go to the front line. Frankly speaking, I am not afraid of death, after all the real empire is up there. I just haven't yet reconciled myself with the thought that I am really going there and I am not aware that I am leading a virtuous life. Since I have been in the army, I lost touch with the One and I stopped working on myself.



Ivan Merz in Graz – the first picture from the army.

Doubts about moral justifications of participation in war

I didn't reflect on what I could correct in myself and I am not clear at all whether I am in the service of a good cause. Oftentimes I wanted pain and suffering, but when it came, I asked myself if it has a purpose. After all, I have this nagging thought whether I

should have taken the vow, in other words, to solemnly promise that I will fight against those which the gentlemen in their comfortable offices determine. After all, I was always against war; I would much rather embrace all the people and make peace with everyone, and now I am killing them. Let's assume – we are fighting against the tyrants; but now the question arises, are we here in this world to be the judges? My answer is: “No”. But, even against that there are the miracles of St. Joan of Arc and the wars of St. Louis which is a clear proof that Providence allowed us to physically fight against the suppressors of the soul.

Vacillations and reflections about war and peace, about the “holy“ war

The latter proof is stronger and I could console myself that the battle against the Italians is a kind of holy war from the Croatian point of view. Admittedly, Austria is, in the words of Kralik, *ein politisches Kunstwerk*²²⁶, where every nation is free (supposed to be!), and each sacrifices itself for the common idea. This would provide justification of our battles against other peoples from which we learned so much that is good and beautiful. The old story about the decline of the Roman Empire is playing itself out again... Again, the thought impresses itself on me that every state should sacrifice for the sake of peace something of its individuality, and not seek its own way at any cost. Peace should prevail, and in the Apocalypse it says that there will always be war. But, are we participating in that evil? I am still not clear about that; the key issue for me now is to engage myself within me because I know that I am so weak, that I will go to the front lines and fight valiantly, even if I am in principle against it.

Graz, 20 March 1916 – (19 years and 3 months)

Visit to the opera and listening to Troubadour

I could write a lot, but I know, it would all be disjointed, just as my thoughts are disordered now. Apart from that I am tired from the exercises. Yesterday I listened to the *Troubadour*. I didn't understand almost anything of the content, and as regards the music, this is an opera full of beautiful, charming melodies, or it is only a background for words. Otherwise, nothing special; it lacks the dramatic action like in Verdi. Surely, a beginner's work.

In the Baroque mystical church Maria Trost recommends himself to the Pure Mother

I was also in Maria Trost. A large Baroque church; inside everything is ornate, full of snakelike pillars, sunrays and broken lines. It contains something of the complicated thoughts and search; the complication which is so simple because it seeks the Indeterminate One. When I stepped inside and recommended myself to the Pure Mother and saw the people praying and standing up from their pews with tears in their eyes, I rediscovered that world which has been so far from me lately. And the whole mystique of the church, the twinkling of the eternal light and innumerable candles, it all envelops the spirit as a supernatural perfume. Description is unnecessary; everyone knows how the vicinity of the Eucharist heals. Nature is beautiful.

²²⁶ German: political work of art



The Mariatrost church in Graz



Interior of the Mariatrost church in Graz where Ivan often prayed.

Review of military maltreatment caused by a man without religion

I am glad that now I have to endure something at least. It is still nothing in a broader perspective; a great bodily tiredness after which I am hungry and sleep like a log. Yes, I like to suffer; although I fear using this word, it might be too strong. My mother, my father and all those millions who would suffer everything for a piece of bread – they suffer. And I have all that.

But, looking objectively on people who are the cause of this strenuous work and the objective they want to achieve, a sorrowful smile covers my face. They want us to work incessantly so they torture us without end, without rest and respect, threatening us with punishment and rude yelling. Poor people, they don't know that nothing is learned if you overdo it. An ordinary peasant knows this logic, but not an officer; I know these people well. I know that they strive to have some so-called principles: to be kind when the soldiers are doing fine, and enormously rude when they are not. A typical officer approach. Instead of working with love, to see what is possible and what not, he ought to have regard that we are not children, but people who are maybe worth more than him. If such a thing happened to him in the Cadet School, he would secretly protest and yell at his captain; call him various military names, being all the while the same himself. Yes, at

times he is so helpful, and at other times he tortures us without reason. Only a man without religion can be like that. This I feel in every moment.

Review of Chateaubriand's work Abencérage

I read Chateaubriand's *Abencérage*. (...) The work can be listed in the first attempts at a French historical novel. Chateaubriand succeeded with relative ease because the monuments from the Moorish age were still alive and he only needed to find an intrigue which will resurrect this forgotten world to life. (...)

(Here follows a brief description of the content – unfortunate love of a Christian girl towards a Moor, the last descendant of the Abencérage tribe)

Ljubo wrote that he is going to Sarajevo. I feel sorry for him.

Graz, 23 March 1916 – (19 years and 3 months)

*Struggle within himself, mastering the dependence on food,
on the necessity to become a practicing Catholic*

Now that I stabilized myself a little bit (both spiritual battles have begun!) I will soon have to move to Wildon. I am dissatisfied with myself; I see that in this short time in the army I deteriorated spiritually. This is the price of the new life in which I couldn't orient myself very well. I could list small instances. I am always hungry and in order not to eat all the time, I eat to fullness three times a day. And it is odd. Here we have food with walnuts, biscuits and such things for spoiled children. And I always feel that it is a weakness of will to submit to such sensual pleasure. One shouldn't think of food at all, but eat what is offered. This is what I did at home. But here, I am in a dilemma: there is not much food, and it isn't nourishing. My organism seems like it is poisoned; I always feel the need to eat something sweet along with ordinary food. Maybe this is a habit like smoking, morphine and the like. I will try to correct this habit with time.

*Judicaberis ex facta non ex scientia*²²⁷, I think these are the words of Kempis. Maybe such a prosaic matter is not fit for a diary, but in my present life circumstances it plays a role. In my case the issue is not any more about theoretical Christianity; I already became a member of the society and must become a practicing Catholic, and this is best seen in such everyday trivialities.

²²⁷ Latin: You will be judged by your deeds, not by your knowledge.



Ivan during his first military training in Graz, upper row, second from the right, with tarboosh hat

Renewed doubts and dilemmas concerning war and warfare

But, the worst of all is surely the military. Christ factually said: render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. Along with that, Mahnić²²⁸ speaks clearly that this is a war for justice and the homeland. I didn't find my way in this dilemma. I reckon with the facts: to kill a man. When I think of that, I cannot recognize myself. I always dreamed of brotherhood and love. Franulić told me that Catholic morals demands obedience to the Emperor and that our ethical duty is to execute military duties. This is a big problem for me. If it were like that in history, maybe the whole history wouldn't move forward an inch. What else created and destroyed empires, but disobedience? When a ruler orders something evil, I hold that the servant is obliged to disobey. I do not mean to say by that that I am serving an evil cause, quite the contrary I sense a great mission in this war, but it is not quite clear to me. And alongside that, I maintain that the war could have been avoided.

Graz, Monday, 27 March 1916 – (19 years and 3 months)

Self-reflection of his average state of mind and need to rise from the shallowness of the military environment

The name "Greta Teschner" sounds so odd. As if it contains the hidden meaning of my life, as if in its secret sounds lies the hidden "eternal-female" soul.

From day to day I descend lower and lower; in every moment, I observe myself as a weak man, and what is worst of all is that I seem to be the so-called *Durchschnittsmensch*.²²⁹ Every moment I feel that the shallowness of my environment permeates me; there is almost nothing that would elevate me above it and show me that I am an individual, spiritually independent of my environment. Even as I write the diary, I frequently express this superficiality. For instance, I say that this man has an erratic temper, the cause of which is that he is not pure on the sexual side (also spiritual!). Such a comment could be said by any little Catholic, and a disbeliever will only apply the same to

²²⁸ The bishop of Krk Antun MAHNIĆ (1850–1920), initiator of the Croatian Catholic Movement where Merz was a member.

²²⁹ German: an average man.

his kind of people. Here, in judging people I look at the character traits all around me, not thinking about the purpose of a man, about the question of what is man in his essence, how is his soul tied to the body. In other words, I mustn't plunge into the depths. I am too much of an egoist; tied to my body. I judge people as they treat me and if they torture me, I don't like them. I ought to raise myself above my own pain and reflect on where they lead me and is this corporal who inflicts the pain behaving ethically.

Condemns his superficiality and desires the Eucharist

I am a hugely weak man. The "tiny strands" took me apart. I stepped into life just a little bit, and already I am disloyal to my principles. I think of food a lot and maybe at times I eat too much. Then, I am not precise in everything. I am superficial. But, the greatest pain is that I never got a chance to go to the Holy Mass. Nonsense. I should have sacrificed myself and I would have found the opportunity. Because, just now as I need spiritual strength, I must drink from the inexhaustible spring of Love, from that all-powerful essence of the Eucharist which enlightens the soul, which is brighter than the day, which turns the soul into a pure delight which is at peace feeling something unknown, immeasurable. I yearn with all my powers to drink again from this source.

Deus, adiuva me!²³⁰

Graz, sri., 29. III. 1916. – (19 g. i 3 mj.)

Impressed by the faith of simple soldiers which he admires and wishes to gain

Oh God, how great you are. I am full of joy and happiness. I saw a tiny little thing, but still as great as I have never seen in my entire life. I experienced a part of history; I clearly felt how Providence is its guide and how every war is in its essence a religious war; it is only here that the good and evil crystalize themselves. There is no middle ground. This is what I saw: the Annenstrasse was full of traffic. The shop windows were all lit, trams rushing in both directions, and people, mostly soldiers strolled along. Here, silently and dignified, stands the Baroque church of the Brothers of Mercy. The three great doors were closed. And what was in front of the doors? In front of the doors two soldiers were kneeling in prayer... Oh, what spiritual greatness in simple people. The deep religious enthusiasm, the deep Christian mysticism of the saints (great Pius X) still exists. And these soldiers, oblivious to the remaining unbelieving world which looked upon them with scorn, knelt down in the midst of a lively place in front of the church and prayed in the presence of the Eucharist. God, God, please hear the call of a weak man and give me that huge, sincere faith of these simple people.

When I salute on the road passing beside a church, I am rather embarrassed because of the others. And when I wanted to go into that same church to pay respect to the Eucharist, I didn't have the slightest thought to kneel in front of the church. How much the corruption and human prejudices still live in me! I always and constantly strive to improve myself, and I am getting weaker and weaker. God, please give me strength! This small event was *a thing of beauty which is a joy for ever.*²³¹ I was already desperate thinking of the corruption of the present generation and on the rampant venereal diseases. And all of a sudden, there was another, mystical sort of people who will have the strength to fight against it.

A look from on high upon the human smallness, one should go into the mountains

When I was on Schlossberg, I had the feeling that I am Gulliver. Looking from above, the three-story buildings seem like tiny little houses, and the trams glide like toys.

²³⁰ Latin: God, help me.

²³¹ From the poet John Keats. Merz particularly liked this verse and he quotes it several times in the Diary.

People are strange ants. If I stepped with my foot on a house, I would smash it to pieces. How tiny these people are down there and looking from above it seems funny that they battle against each other, that they hold each other accountable, that they lift their noses up, etc. O tiny human species!

One ought to go into the mountains. There is the life, only there does one get rid of the mud of the valley.



*Church of the Brothers of Mercy in Graz in front of which soldiers were kneeling in prayer.
This left a deep impression on Ivan.*

Slovenska Bistrica, Thursday, 6 April 1916 – (19 years and 4 months)

Pain enables him to better understand Christ's sacrifice

Here I cannot properly recollect myself. Around me there is only chatter and the learning of military stupidities. My spiritual mood is worse than in Graz. Sometimes I am overcome with anger – righteous anger – against human stupidity and I would like to destroy all. I would like to hold the Earth on one end and throw it into the abyss, let it burst into pieces.

Admittedly, I sometimes feel a kind of satisfaction, real joy for suffering unjustly; this brings me closer to Christ. Only in this mental anguish I can approximately picture the crucified Christ: for nothing, to give your life without any interest, to let yourself be crucified unjustly for the mankind! God – Christ!

Art must be learnt from nature

At times, when I am not too tired, I enjoy in nature. Oh, how beautiful it is! The cherries are blossoming; so beautiful and white. And the thought occurs to me that we ought to learn from them. After all, art shouldn't be without practical value. The cherry tree gives us food, and in all its life phases it is so beautiful, magnificent. So should be the art. It must have its purpose – the enjoyment in beauty, harmony and the rest. Further on, it can be the servant of religion in a broad sense. The *l'art pour l'art*²³² – nature tells us – is a stupidity. Is there anything in nature which is beautiful but without a purpose?! And the other way around?!

²³² French: art for the purpose of art

Criticism of the military environment in which he finds himself

It is difficult to objectively describe one's life. We get up at 5 a.m. and in the morning we practice. At 2 p.m. again this tiresome exercise until 4 p.m. From 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. we have school; again, the same annoying routine like in the Academy. There is a beautiful world out there,²³³ and no free thinking or a deeper outlook on life. I am sometimes disgusted with my colleagues. In the morning, they haven't woken up properly and already they have a cigarette in their mouth. This smoking seems to be a characteristic of our age. There must always be some sensual pleasure.



Slovenska Bistrica where Ivan spent four months in an officer course.

Slovenska Bistrica, 14 April 1916 – (19 years and 4 months)

Gets acquainted with the works of Vladimir Nazor thanks to Mr. Ribarić

Life is monotonous. Learning is an annoyance. I am glad to have come upon Mr. Josip Ribarić²³⁴, a senior and a good friend of Nazor. Of course, our entire conversation is circling around this great poet of ours. He tells me about his ascetic way of life and of the real foundation of his poems. *Songs of Love* have a factual foundation. Mrs. Brovet's husband was in the army. She used to come to Kastav frequently to visit an old school teacher. She was an intelligent woman – interested in botany, and also pretty. Nazor used to glance furtively at her. “And what do you think, this ascetic once invited Mrs. Brovet and this other lady to lunch”, said Ribarić. They also used to go for walks, but never alone. And that was all. Then she went to Krk and they will never see each other again. (This love reminds me of *Werther*, even of *Immensee*). An unexperienced eye wouldn't notice anything there; but Nazor experienced a lot. The fruit of this are his poems. One ought to analyze these poems; after all, we have Nazor in front of us. An especially beautiful poem is the one in which he tells her they will never meet again, but will think of one another.

Ribarić thinks that she experienced this love much deeper. An ordinary man would be happy; but it is the tragic fate of the poet who is above ordinary people and like

²³³ He thinks of the blossoming nature which is not in harmony with his current situation in the army.

²³⁴ Josip RIBARIĆ, linguist (1880–1954). Born in Vodice (Istria), completed his education at Sušak, and the study of Slavistics in Vienna. As a language teacher, he worked in Kastav, Buje and Poreč. He was drafted into the army in World War I where he met Ivan Merz and a friendship ensued. In the literary field, he cooperated with Vladimir Nazor. He wrote a study *About the Istrian Dialects* (in Croatian) After World War I, as an expert for Istria he was part of the delegation of the SHS state on the peace conference in Paris in 1919. He continued work on the cultural and literary field. After World War II the communist government denied him the pension. In 1948, he accepted the invitation of Fr. Božo Milanović to lecture Croatian at the Seminary High School in Pazin. In 1950 he came to Zagreb where he participated in several projects of the Language Institute of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences among other in compiling the Academy's Dictionary. He died in Zagreb in 1954.

*Moïse*²³⁵ he strives for ordinary human happiness, but in his greatness and solitude remains unhappy.

On the formal side of things, it was Ribarić's persuasion which brought Nazor to the view that rhythm must correspond to the accents of the words. Such a poem is *Intima*. Maybe he accepted this suggestion so quickly because Pascoli in Italy is part of the same school; and Nazor loved him very much. After all, Nazor was writing in Italian before he did in Croatian.

The poem *Crystal Forest* is a fact. In 1913 in the vicinity of Kastav there was a strong northerly wind, all the water on the trees froze and the forest was like glass, transparent, crystal, shining in the colors of the rainbow.

Slovenska Bistrica, Sunday, 16 April 1916 – (19 years and 4 months)

After visiting a church he is full of light, enthusiasm and love

I was in church after a long time. Great. Thanks to that, today I am full of some light, full of enthusiasm and love. That mystical life came back to me for a moment.

Mater Dolorosa, mater amabilis – how good she is!

I spent a nice afternoon with Ribarić and lieutenant Kondić. We sat in a tavern in Gornja Bistrica. In one small room, there were the volunteers and they sang. *Filia hospitalis*, a piquant girl entertained them. They carried her around and made fun. We were reading Baudelaire. Ribarić particularly liked some comparisons. He was elated. But he mostly interpreted for us the *Songs of Love*, how they were written and their meaning. He was telling us about Nazor's love of music. He knows *Lohengrin*, and on one occasion, just to hear *Aida* he travelled from Graz to Vienna. He also knows *Tosca* almost by heart. He said that a poet must be a simple office worker who must learn, think and chisel his poems like a sculptor. On another occasion, I will write more about the interpretations of the poems.

Slovenska Bistrica, Monday, 24 April 1916 – (19 years and 4 months)

He was in church on Easter, received Communion, fighting with his weaknesses

This is my second Easter in a foreign land. On Easter Sunday, yesterday, I received the Holy Communion and this gave me strength and poured into my soul an immeasurable wealth of joy. But several hours after that there was something like a terrible reaction. Although I never doubted anything, I still didn't grasp the magnitude of this mystery and, in a word, the feeling of a terrible inner dissatisfaction came over me. It is probably because I am enormously weak; *abstinentia vera pax invenitur*²³⁶ - these are, I believe the words of Kempis, and in theory I agree with him. But what about the difference between theory and practice? I am a weak child; I always worry about food and I lose energy. I ought to think during the day even when I'm tired, hungry, whatever. And at night I ought to sleep. Whereas I sleep the whole day. Everything passes as if in a slumber, without energy, mechanically. I will try to strengthen my will, not to do as my instincts tell me, but as the will commands. Help me, God!

Review and analysis of Shakespeare's Richard III

I read Shakespeare's *Richard III*. At the first instance the work doesn't leave the impression which engulfs you with its full impact only later. But I felt already in the

²³⁵ Here Merz does not refer to the historical Moses, but a literary character of Moses (*Moïse*) as the poet Vigny portrayed him in his work *Moïse*. Merz wrote about this work and the character of Moses at the beginning of his diary on 13 March 1914, and here he makes a link with this topic.

²³⁶ Latin: real peace comes with abstinence

beginning – and these were ancillary words – that one is dealing with great thoughts here. I don't have the time to go into details now, but will only emphasize the basic thought.

Richard III is a character who lives in the society of all ages. Of course, here he is brought, as is characteristic of Shakespeare and literature in general (Molière), to the point of absurdity. He is a bodily cretin; humpbacked, lame, with one arm dead. A human beast. Everyone avoids him, everyone sees him as a symbol of evil. (...) There will always be such Richards. How many people even today are ignored by the society due to their appearance? We see often that these characters are truly mean and morose; they often try to harm the healthy people whom they envy. (...) Spiritually, Richard wins like in Coriolanus. His good ancient spirit – by means of pangs of conscience – claims victory. He is disadvantaged in a bodily way, but his acknowledgement of his evil shows that he is a much greater and deeper man than his environment which judges him by appearance.

(Here follows the presentation of the content of the drama, the analysis and critique of the characters, especially Richard, and a review on the composition of the drama along with many quotations in German).

Slovenska Bistrica, 10 May 1916 – (19 years and 5 months)

Criticizes immoral behavior of some members of the Domagoj Catholic organization

Terrible: not because I am a slave to the body, but I look how among our ranks filthiness rules. This Bogdan Babić is immoral, sensual and God knows what else. Alongside him the little Belančić in a public inn pinches a waitress. In the light of all that Babić is not ashamed to say that he is a member of *Domagoj*. Really terrible. Admittedly, although they are members of a Croatian Catholic organization by title, they are worse than the most liberal ones. Terrible and horrible. They should be kicked out of any organization; our dignity is at stake.

Fervent prayers answered – his mother converted

A lot has passed through my head in this last period of time. There is the battle against the body, the striving to lift myself with my mind above all this and to unite with nature, and consequently, with God. A difficult battle which goes on incessantly. Along with that, the parents were here and for several hours I felt like the old “me” who loves these people enormously and knows that they love me too. And I could see how Providence takes care of everything; how everything has its meaning, including my being in the army. If it wasn't for that, I don't believe that mother would return to God and she has done it now. My most fervent prayer is fulfilled. Father too, when he set his foot in the beautiful nature, he was overcome by a prayerful mood. He is still subject to the wrong modern logic, but that will pass. Everything is good.

Delighted with Nazor as a poet

With Ribarić I read Nazor and it is only now that I am becoming intimate with our poetry; I come more and more to the conviction that our language is beautiful, provided it is in the right hands. For instance, Nazor's. If Nazor had given us only his language with its epithets he would have done a lot. But, alongside that he rose upon the *Dream Mountain* above any political partisanship and gave us in his poems his deep spiritual life. On another occasion, I will write a study about him.

Longing for unification with God

God, God, how much I love you, how much I thank you for filling my soul now with a strange, full delight. As my soul rises, flying toward you, it wants to break out of this chest with superhuman strength and to go up, to unite with you forever.²³⁷



Josip Ribarić acquainted Ivan with the works of Vladimir Nazor.

Slovenska Bistrica, 15 May 1916 – (19 years and 5 months)

Letter to Dr. Maraković on Nazor's religiousness

These days when Merz read and studied Nazor he wrote an extensive and interesting letter to his teacher Dr. Maraković about Nazor. Here we quote a part from this letter relating to Nazor's religiousness and the full letter shall be published in a separate volume of his Collected Works together with the rest of his correspondence.

(...) I am now preoccupied with the study of Nazor; knowing how highly you esteem him and that you will be interested in every detail from his life, I will tell you a little bit more about him. But, firstly I wish to tell you of the circumstances which drew my attention to him. Therefore, "ab ovo"!²³⁸ (...)

(Here follows an extensive review of the beginnings of Nazor's works and his private life which he found out from Nazor's friend Ribarić)

With this I end my brief account of Nazor; when I will have studied him fully, I will send you the fruits of my labor; but mainly I can say on the basis of his *New Poems* that he created much of what I myself have longed for.

Regarding his religion: here Nazor is similar to Hugo. A great optimist, a complete contrast to Kranjčević. In *On the Top* and *New Poems* Nazor explicates his religion. He is in favor of Christian ethics with his mind and body and he enormously admires the esthetic side of the cult of the Madonna which is such a beautiful trait among the Croatian folk. For this reason, he especially likes one Pascoli poem where the May devotions are described... Outside the bells toll "Ave Maria" and I greet you with warm and friendly regards – Hans.

²³⁷ On the same day twelve years later, on 10 May 1928, Ivan Merz completed his earthly life. What he had anticipated and predicted came to fulfilment: a union with God in eternity.

²³⁸ Latin: To start from the beginning

Slovenska Bistrica, 24 May 1916 – (19 years and 5 months)

Continues the inner battle, studies people around him, longs for Banja Luka

Emptiness in the soul. I cannot find time to think and get deeper into myself. A lot is happening around me and it is as if my only work is to study people around me and strive to lift myself above this environment. It is hard at times, but I see that I am less dependent on money and other things.

I continue the study of Nazor. When I finish with him, I will describe one day the people here, their conversations and gestures. Various kinds of people can be found here and in them I see the future of entire nations and mankind itself. Suljić is going to Banja Luka and something is moving inside my soul. I don't know why that is so. That milieu of the main street, the barbers shop, reading rooms, Anka Jovićeva and pious Croatian women full of prejudices, all of it pulls me strongly.

Slovenska Bistrica, Sunday, 4 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Admires the poet Nazor and his literary greatness

I cheered up a little today reading Nazor's *Istrian Stories*. I didn't know that among the Croats there are so modern and beautiful stories which can stand along those by Selma Lagerlöf. Factually, the Croats are blind; they do not see what a great cultural epoch they are going through, what a great poet they have in the person of Nazor. Only when he dies they will see that he was a giant.

He is not a poet who lives in the town isolated, who like Verlaine arrives at such deep feelings due to contrast with society. No, he reminds me of Pindar and others who are isolated from the society and live on the heights where they create their own world and observe from those heights the past and present of nations and pave the way for the future. That's why we see that there is an epic note in his lyrics; that these are not descriptions of feelings of an individual who creates, lives and loves like other people, but this is a new Homer, Moses, the priest of the people who gives us in his poetry his impressions about nature, his philosophy of it, and the philosophy of his nation.

In the first story, there is a great influence of Lagerlöf, especially her *Märchenroman*²³⁹ and its technique where a real event is described like in a fable with those conventional colors and where real life is being observed through the naive eyes of a child, where the chivalrous notions of good and evil predominate, and not the nuances and the breakup of characters. There is also the historical background which Lagerlöf gives us in *Gösta*, the historical and cultural background of Wermland. Nazor gave us beautiful descriptions of Istria, with the historical age of Kastav knights and Cres noblemen who came with their marriage proposals on their galleys. In Nazor we also find magnificent descriptions of forests and the town of Kastav with its valleys and nightingales and a description of a "mountain emperor" who plays the double flute. The descriptions of the sea and moonlight, of a night *à la Walpurgis* is something we haven't had in Croatian literature until now.

My soul is rotting. Sensuality torments me; those most brutal thoughts wish to seize upon me in every moment.

Slovenska Bistrica, Monday, 5 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Review, analysis and judgement of Nazor's tale Facol Rakamani

Nazor's novel? Short story? Facol Rakamani is not technically beyond reproach. It is plainly clear that this tale did not arise from a deeper spiritual need such as *Gösta*, but

²³⁹ German: fairy tale novel

that the poet is such a great artist that he imitates the style of Selma Lagerlöf with ease, uses the colors of the *Song of Songs*, the mystique of Strindberg and the minerals and herbal scents of Wilde. In this novel, however, there are two rather inappropriately mixed elements which could have been written as two separate novels. (...)

(Here follows a summary of the tale, analysis and a comment on the content)

Description of a forest. This is something entirely different than the prosaic Kozarac in his *Slavonian Forest*. Here every blade of grass, every oak, literally everything smells and blooms. Then we have the sea with all its blue-greyish details at every single moment of the day, especially under the moonlight. This description is the best in Croatian literature. Along with that we have romantic details, although this is actually *Walpurgisnacht*²⁴⁰ brought into harmony with Croatian tradition. Those expressions of love, the yearning of a man for a woman, and the other way around, like in the *Song of Songs* is actually a magnificent imitation of this book by Solomon; only it seems to me that the transition is too direct and that the manner in which this expression of love has been pushed into the work is too clearly visible.

As I already said, this work derives a special magic from that naive observation of life as in a fable, that comparison of gems and other conventional, but characteristic expressions in the fable (lips like rubies and similar). The resurrection of cultural history, the period of the Kastav Captaincy, the Cres Prefect and shepherd Divljan in the fable manner, like in Selma, are all beautiful. One gets the desire that Nazor writes some Istriad, just like *Gösta* is a Wermlandiad, where in the form of these

Märchenerzählungen (fairy tales) all the sides of the Istrian life will be exhausted.

Slovenska Bistrica, Monday, 12 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

A critical review of Nazor's tales and poems continues

The old Fran is not realistically portrayed. As if Nazor cannot show us these people whom he meets every day, but only those created by his imagination. It could be that there is the same background to his political views: he doesn't know that Serbian trait (the immense will) and the Jews (Chamberlain!), but makes them into a separate kind of people according to his wishes and assigns to them the same role as the Croats have. Maybe he is right, like a prophet who, observing from above the destiny of his people, gives them the guidepost into the future. (...) Nazor didn't probe into the history and evolution of nations with the same intensity as he did into the course of nature, in its life, music and colors...

The battle between "light and darkness" in Nazor's poems as a reflection of the human soul, evolution towards Christianity

Along with that, his *Intima* shows a beautiful evolution towards Christianity. From the *Cyclops*, a classical delight in the gaiety and love drive in nature, to the mysticism in *Voice* and many other poems (very strongly in *New Poems*) we perceive a possibly inadvertent passage towards Christian ethics. What Grgec said in *Hrvatska Prosvjeta*²⁴¹ about the Fichtean Nazor is an overly superficial judgement. Even he knows that the human soul, even of the most Catholic person is not simple or primitive. In it, there is an

²⁴⁰ WALPURGISNACHT is the night between 30th April and 1st May which is a celebration of the arrival of spring and warmer weather. It is filled with gaiety, amusement, music and song. It is particularly celebrated in Germany, but also in the neighboring countries.

²⁴¹ A Croatian literary magazine

everlasting battle of “light and darkness” (*Songs of Love*) and it is a much greater ordeal to defend and maintain the captured Christianity in one’s soul than it is to rise to that pinnacle. So, if a poet gets a momentary inspiration – it happens to us too – and he likes in Reklam’s *History of Philosophy* a text about Fichte which says that only we exist, the rest is only a shadow, specter, illusion – no wonder he immediately elaborates on that. Nator’s poem *My World* isn’t really his view on life, because in that case he would be in complete contradiction with himself.

“When shall I, being strong and good be able
to descend among the people from this castle of mine?”
Why should he descend at all if he is the only thing that exists?!

Life is more than poetry which must lead toward general harmony

Enough of that. We ought to deal a little bit with real life, because life is more than poetry. I came to that conclusion reading Chamberlain’s

*Grundlagen des XIX. Jahrhundert.*²⁴² Although this man is not thorough, he occasionally gets some idea which is extraordinary. He says that history consists of personalities who possessed the power to elevate themselves from their milieu and its prejudices and to create a greater ethics. This is an exaggeration, of course, but their heroic struggle against the body and the wrong ethics of the centuries and laws captured thousands of people, and gave an example to the centuries who also strived towards a great and arduous spiritual life which gives life its poetry. We don’t want formal poetry, the one which observes the beauties of colors and the entire harmony, but the one which must pass through the retort of the great life and who will be able to bring it all into harmony and lead us to the point of asking: “What?”, “Where from?”

Slovenska Bistrica, Tuesday, 13 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Reflections on life

I stop my thoughts when they start welling up... no harm in that, I see so much that is new that it might be a damage to enter into philosophical speculations and destroy the entire life for their sake. It is maybe best to describe something once it’s over; when a new or an old inner period begins anew. I feel weak and I am convinced that in this observation of life there is a lot of egoism; but now I will strive to make a judgement of all these impressions about life – this great and beautiful life.

Human love as a symbol of three Divine Persons and the Madonna

The problem of women is of greatest interest to me and it is as if I feel that in this respect I am getting closer and closer to the Truth. Earlier I thought of love in spiritual sense as a longing of the eternal-male for the eternal-female. As if it was some symbol of the relationship between the Madonna and God or as the *Song of Songs* compares: the relationship between the Lord and the chosen people. But here it seems that a large role is played by a third thing – the child Jesus. This is how I would interpret it (admittedly, I don’t know the ultimate cause!): The Creator, having created the entire world, including the male and the female for the sake of their spiritual relationship, extracted (it is a bad word) a part of his Grace and created the Madonna who, being Grace incarnated, only strives (the mystical rose of prayer!) towards the Source. And just like from the striving of the Truth towards Love, the Inspiration (Holy Spirit) emerged which is both Love and Truth, everything is in one, so from this relationship of the Creator and Madonna there emerged the yearning for the Third, the child. This seems a bit disjointed, but one thing is certain: this life is only a symbol of the other life. However, I am aware myself that this

²⁴² German: The foundations of the 19th century.

speculation is too perverse and that it is necessary to gather more ideas if we want to build a true metaphysical system.

Slovenska Bistrica, Wednesday, 14 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Analyses of love, marriage, the purpose of true love

With regard to love this is what I found out from Rosetti: when he ran away on his tricycle to Maribor and came to his girlfriend, he spent the whole day until 4 a.m. the next morning at her place. Rain was pouring outside and they were sitting on the floor of her room packing a suitcase. She, holding a large needle in her small hands, tried to pierce the cloth, but without success: he had to help her always. As he wasn't feeling well, he would sometimes stretch on the floor and doze off: then he would get up again, and they looked at each other until she said: "I would like to have your eyes". As he leaned over, an artistic reproduction of Kaulbach's child fell from his pocket. And as both of them looked on this beautiful child, they both said inadvertently: "I would like to have a child with you."

There was no thought of anything sensual, but an expression of a fully spiritual striving, an instinct which puts all the sensuality in marriage in a higher category. The result is this: the ideology of a woman strives toward maternity in an exclusively spiritual manner. This material part is only a symbol of the spiritual one. All the poets celebrate this love in verse, though each of them understood it differently; one, like Rodin (poet in the broader sense of the word) immortalized the striving of a man towards a woman and the other way around; the striving which is the foundation of this world. Of course, this striving is being reflected in intimacy, in movements and bodily forms. I hold that his *Baiser*²⁴³ is not bad, as Ljubo wrote to me, but here only the spiritual striving is represented, not animal egoism. Because really, the platonic love which shies away from every sensuality and from the unconscious instinct of the woman toward maternity must die. Only then will an ordinary woman want to discover herself when her husband perceives her as such.

One would arrive at this conclusion observing Babić's and Rosetti's fiancées. A lot is correct here; but I gather that Babić delved excessively into the world of the sensual. There is always smooching, embracing, kissing and pulling; he says he has the desire to unite with her fully – in body and soul. Surely, she feels the same way too! They can't wait until marriage to achieve that. I asked him if he could endure alongside her a couple of months without touching her, trying only to penetrate into the depths of her soul, seeing how she – a woman – feels about it, how she experiences what is beautiful and judges the ethics of modern society. One should talk with women about arts because they have such a refined esthetic feeling that we could learn a lot about it from them.

Differentiating right from wrong love

I hold that the real love is one which takes into account the spiritual feature of maternity. Such a woman is an inspiration for the artist and the worker. She is like a mother of their works. In the sensual sense, she is only a symbol of the spiritual. Such love is possible only in very strong people – both of them! – who succeeded in subduing the body – and are striving only towards this. This is an ideal for us; because at moments when we are in female company, when we look into those strange eyes, our flesh wants to rebel. That's why the Scripture says that friendship with bad man is better than one with a good-natured woman. The reason is not in the woman, but in us. This makes it understandable how great poets – Musset, Vigny, Baudelaire (even Nazor) came to the conclusion that a woman is a monster, etc. It is their fault, because they thought of love towards some "idol", whereas this was a completely ordinary woman with female features

²⁴³ Rodin's sculpture *Kiss*

who wanted to be understood, not venerated. And when they felt in her something contrary to this idol, they went to the extreme.

And what does Nagel say?! I analyze myself as I analyze him; I try to explain love, but when it happens to me, it would have to die because neither her nor I will have the willpower to open ourselves to one another without any sensuality, kisses, etc. Ultimately, I refuse all this because it connects me too much with the animal and with mankind which so disgustingly and brutally exploits this striving for union, thus turning people into animals.

Observes and comments on a friend's girlfriend

Babić's "*schön Clärchen*" – as I call her – is a real girl *à la Spitzweg*, the hero of Eichendorff, intimate like Möricke, emotional like Gretl from *Faust*. A real German. Unrestrained, she flies, jumps, plays, wants to laugh even when angry, seemingly without logic, and along with all that a proud woman who loves without vivisection, a botanist; interested in all that is beautiful. When she is alone with someone, she gladly enters into deeper conversation. Worth a thousand times more than her future husband who doesn't respect her pride and her goodness. Admittedly, when she is beside him, she ennobles him and I hold that she will unwittingly raise him from the spiritual mud into which he has fallen. He is hoping for that too.

A glimpse on everyday military life

In the army: great conflicts between the Czechs and the Germans. The first are ungenial, immoral, egoists, who do not give anything to anybody. But in the national sense, they impress me. After drinking *Brüderschaft* with Russian prisoners, they complain without any fear that their 28th Regiment had casualties, and a certain Horaček reported the captain for having said that he wounded himself. The captain was obliged to give him satisfaction, and on another occasion when this captain scolded another soldier, he stood defiantly in his defense, not fearing being sent to the front lines or anything. It is a strange and great national consciousness which is not afraid of the death itself.

Recognized himself in a Nazor's poem

This poem by Nazor is as if it was written for me at this moment, and I dedicate it to "*Lieb-Clärchen*".

That strong, fateful, no, it isn't you
That will hurl my soul, like a stone from a slingshot,
Into the darkness or the burning sun:
You only filled me with sadness.
No, it isn't you, whose shining symbol
Stands suspended on my sky, and all that I have
Slides toward the sign hanging above my head:
You were only the curl of the light that I'm waiting for.
You only filled me with sadness;
And this pain entered in my thinnest veins
Like a black tide of a fruitful force.
You were only a flicker of the light that I'm waiting for;
And this flicker wasn't shining enough,
To shed light on an endless path of mine.

Slovenska Bistrica, 16 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Inner battles, Nazor and some of his works

The worst of all is that I remain on the same ethical level, and in many respects, I experience a decline. It is difficult to please society and God at the same time; these last few days I was mostly sleeping; actually, I didn't look... yes, look. The battle is hard and we must invite it.

Ribarić visited Nazor. He told me Nazor wrote a romantic epos *The Golden Duck* which will be read instead of *Kohan and Vlasta*. Along with that, *Snježana* – I think a *Märchenspiel*²⁴⁴. But, he is mostly preoccupied with translation of *Hell* (Dante) in iambics and a dactyl at the end (something solemn for the choir!). He is considering launching a literary paper like Marconi in Florence which will gather all literary forces irrespective of their world view. I think this is good because *Hrvatska prosvjeta*²⁴⁵ and the esthetic part of *Luč Magazine* (in reality the same!) delve too much into partisan politics (followers of Starčević, nationalists) and accept only the contributions from Catholics, instead of accepting everything that is good – even from pantheists; because there is no person who, even unconsciously, doesn't think in a Catholic way.

Slovenska Bistrica, 17 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

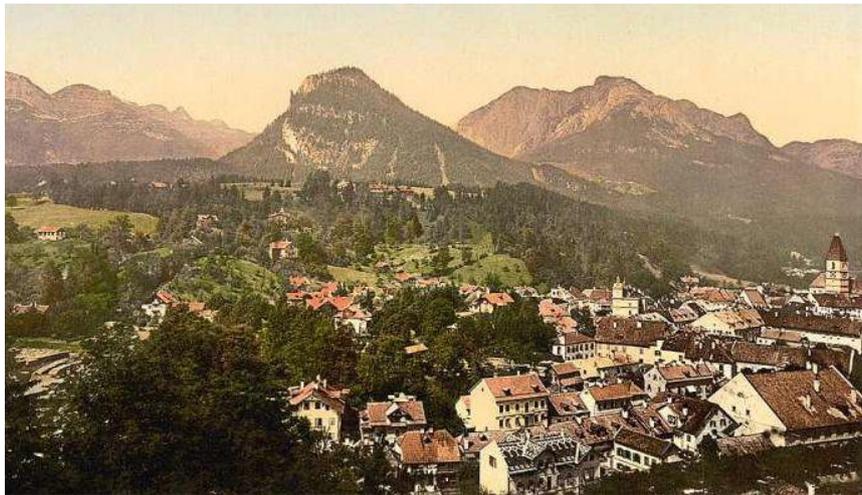
A description of wonderful nature which helps him to recollect

Only today I was able to see where I am. A Styrian village in a green valley. On the east and west, high mountains full of vineyards, and distant hills on the north. The entire nature is dotted with churches. Today for a few moments I went out into the fields during the Angelus. In nature, there was silence, only the cicadas were chirping, and occasionally frogs would howl from the mud like flutes. The stretched-out clouds were mostly grey, gaining a yellowish hue on the western side. On the north, from an opening in the sky there was a watery red color. German and Slovenian churches were standing facing each other; on the left through the greenery one could see the walls, and on the right a modern building could be clearly seen – *Sparkasse* and the court house. Further on in the same direction two towers of Joseph's church were standing out.

As I was wandering here wanting to recollect in my soul, to understand this silence, these colors and the unknown, there was suddenly the sound of Angelus from the Slovenian side, followed by the other churches, and it jerked me. A few moments ago, I was looking for this spiritual world and everything seemed like a stage and only now I felt that all of it is reality and that this invisible world is real.

²⁴⁴ Fairy tale

²⁴⁵ Croatian literary magazine



A village in Styria

Slovenska Bistrica, Tuesday, 27 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Critical review of Norwegian writers and their works; comparison with Croatian writers

(...). I studied the *Songs of Love* and gave my thoughts about them. I read *Mass für Mass* and Björnson's *Das neue System*. I wish to say something about the latter. It can be claimed that a work of art is to a large extent the fruit of the environment in which it was created. In some works, this is more clearly seen, in international ones less (Corot!). But Taine's theory cannot be denied. Norway couldn't give birth to a Kumičić, neither could Croatia to a Björnson. Both are the sons of different nations who are living their different lives. In Croatia, the battle of political parties is on the agenda: the jerks of an enslaved nation. In Norway, the people are free, and here the battles are more "modern". They also have political parties, but they are a kind of social-technical groups. Ibsen managed to become a poet of the entire cultured world; he is interested in general cultural problems. But this Norwegian color cannot be denied. Here various party leaders are something like *couleur locale*, etc. Ibsen's dramas have a cultural value for the study of national struggles in certain years, his Norwegian characters are representing Europe; as a matter of fact, the psychopathological occurrences (Peer Gynt!) are present everywhere and at the same time they are Norwegian.

Björnson is a provincial compared to Ibsen. In Ibsen, tragedy is the eternal Europe, in Björnson the current phenomena and conflicts in Norwegian engineering circles. Both share the same shallowness. Björnson's *Das neue System* is probably the work from his youth; Björnson himself does not partake of that deep social ethics like the Slavs do. A great feature of his, the greatest, which places him immensely above Ibsen, is his optimism, that specific Nordic trait. (...)

(Here follows a summary of the work Das neue System, a critical analysis and a presentation of the characters)

Slovenska Bistrica, 30 June 1916 – (19 years and 6 months)

Value of the book De imitatione Christi – The Imitation of Christ

De imitatione²⁴⁶ is the best book for one's life:

²⁴⁶ The quotation which follows from the book *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1 book, Chapter 9, appendix *Considerationes*) Merz quoted in the Diary in Latin. This is a translation. From the 13th

“Give in to those who disagree with you for the sake of your and their peace. Keep this as a great wisdom if you lack your own wisdom. Where there is a ready obedience, there the conscience is joyful. Where there is humbleness, there is wisdom. Where there is peace and accord, there is God and all the good. Where there is discord and dispute, there is the devil and all evils.”

Slovenska Bistrica, Saturday, 1 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Critical review and analysis of the works L'Intrus and Les Aveugles by Maurice Maeterlinck

A peculiar way of writing, a real reaction to naturalism. He deals with the psyche by a technique which is not naturalistic, professional as in Dostoevsky, but just the contrary: here is the presentation of the indeterminate, the mysterious. A new Romanticism, new idealism, symbolism. Huysmans, Maeterlinck and Verlaine are in the same boat. Admittedly, I fear that this symbolism is only momentary; the poet is writing from the position of a blind man – one who looks only with the soul, the material world doesn't exist for him, and he describes those dark moments of the soul, that mystery of death which we don't know, but whose presence we feel in everything. He managed to present this mood of indetermination beautifully with his symbolic technique... In these dramas – as in a picture – we find classical silence, quietness and a unity of place. There are no great passions here, everything takes place quietly, mysteriously, just like the mystery of nature itself. Everything is portrayed in a visionary light, because the poet is not interested in this world which passes, but he lives only for the other one. He gives the impression of a blind man for whom time doesn't play a role, and undistracted by outer events he can see what we, ordinary mortals don't, but have only dark, vague notions. Maeterlinck is modern in *L'Intrus* because he elaborated the topic of all the centuries: the death of a woman. “Finally, the child which was always silent cries – the light goes out, and the moonlight enters the room. Leaves are falling outside. She is dead.” The symbolism is in the nature too. It is as if everything escorts this posthumous poem, this event of death is not a naked process as in the realists, but is followed by a thousand of secret voices outside of us and inside. (...)

(Here he quotes at length from the work, illustrating the advent of death and the reactions of those present).

*Les Aveugles*²⁴⁷ are similar to the first work. Here also the main role is played by non-materialists, people who don't work, some actually cannot even hear. Full contrast to naturalism which relies only on the senses – seeing, hearing, imitating and the scientific approach. There is nothing of that here, but only instinct and the psyche, no senses. This work too is permeated by that classical peace – a drug for us modern rebels – and a classical simplicity. Here too, we have the presentation of spiritual development only, while the characters remain tied to their physical place.

*Review and analysis of the work Le crime*²⁴⁸ *by Paul Bourget, praises his message*

Turgenev had the greatest impact on this work. We see a guy with his company in the 1870s, a sceptic who seeks the truth and studies medicine only in order to arrive at something positive. This influence is seen also in the technique of the end: after many years, he meets his former friend with whom he spent so much time philosophizing, the monk Saint-Robert, etc... Bourget is among the first protagonists of a new epoch. Isn't it

century when the booklet *The Imitation of Christ* was written, it was the most widely read spiritual book after the Bible all the way to the 20th century.

²⁴⁷French: Blind men

²⁴⁸ French: Crime

unheard of that a child of the 19th century would dare to turn the characteristic word “I don’t know...” into “There” and show the way! Yes, he is the first novelist known to me who introduced the *Erlösungs-idea*²⁴⁹ into the novel and showed the way... We see, moreover, that Bourget himself doesn’t have that deep faith of his main protagonist, that although he is convinced of the truth of Catholicism it didn’t permeate him completely... The words of a modern reader in a dilemma come out of his mouth: “I never knew whether among the people of my time there was the one whom I felt mostly sorry for or whom I envied the most.”

This work elaborates the most modern theme which will maybe emerge in the centuries to come as the characteristic of the 19th century literature: the problem of the sceptic (Wilde, Hamsun, Turgenev, etc.), a man who seeks something positive. All the poets until Bourget left this question unanswered; Bourget was the first to find a way.

Slovenska Bistrica, 5 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Various states of mind, remembering Greta

I didn’t forget you, Gretchen. You are dead, but I still remember you. I couldn’t repeat your words any more, but I know what you are. Your soul has crystallized itself in me; you became my idol whom I love more than any other girl. *Totes Gretchen, schlaf ruhig. Vielleicht auf Wiedersehen.*²⁵⁰

Pain, pain, pain, a sharp and dark pain enveloped me...

I cannot think so much, heat, tiredness, nervousness, noise, it all kills me. I ought to learn more of these military things. Well, I’m not going to fill and spend the brain cells for these purposes. If it wasn’t for the parents whom I love so much, I would know how to master my situation.

Slovenska Bistrica, 6 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

End of the review of Maeterlinck’s Les Aveugles

The work doesn’t have that deep value, neither the dramatic plot as in L’Intruse. In the first, we have in front of us a modern-antiquedrama which presents the symbolism of death, without delving into the problem itself. Here it is similar. Only, the plot is even more ethereal: this is not a drama any more, but a dramatic picture. The favored motif of a blind man in whom the dark side of the soul is developed: instinct and the other which doesn’t know time. The beauty of the work consists in this uncertain, indeterminate action, in the symbolism of nature which, as in Romantics, is in harmony with the indetermination of the soul. I would gladly call Maeterlinck le grand indécis²⁵¹. (...)

(Here follows a brief description of the content of the work, comparison with other writers, a final analysis of his characters and an evaluation of the work)

²⁴⁹ German: The idea of redemption

²⁵⁰ The dead little Greta, sleep quietly. Maybe we shall meet soon.

²⁵¹ French: the great undecided one

Greta's tragic fate in a poem

The following poem has the original title *Mädchen von Kola, du schläfst*.²⁵² This is one of the three poems *Darthulas Grabgesang* (1861) from the musical work of Johannes Brahms, op. 42,3 composed according to the text of *Ossian* from Scotland. Merz in this poem found a reflection of his mood in relation to Greta's death, changed the title and entitled it *An Gretchen*.²⁵³ The poem nicely fits Greta's tragic fate. In the Diary, Merz copied the poem in German.

To the Little Greta !

GIRL FROM KOLA, YOU SLEEP!

Around you the green rivers of Selmas keep silent!

They mourn for you, the last branch
from Thurthil's tree!

When will you appear again in all your beauty?

The most beautiful among the girls from Erin!

You dream your long dream in the grave
your dawn is far away!

Never, oh never again will the sun come

To wake you in your resting place: "Wake up!"

Wake up, Dartula!

The spring is here!

The breeze rustles,

On the green hills, you sweet girl,
the flowers are swaying!

In the forest the buds of leaves are sprouting!

Forever, forever, step aside, you Sun,

From the girl from Kola, she sleeps.

She will never appear in her beauty

You will never see her lovely walk again.

Slovenska Bistrica, Saturday, 15 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Philosophical reflections about good and evil, about the existence of God in the novel Le crime by Paul Bourget; comparison with other writers

We have an officer's exam these days, therefore I always interrupt.

In Bourget's *Le crime* (Crime) we see an enormous influence of Turgenev, and especially in the portraying of that guy from the French society of the 1870s. This is also the most interesting part of the work: this is only the framework (triptych). The main plot comes from the ordinary life of a large city proletariat. The work as such carries no tendencies, but still the moral thesis emerges: only life proves to the people the existence of God. (...) So, who is this modern guy who is so similar to us, who voices what we have experienced inside ourselves? A child of his age: a sceptic seeking security. (...) Yes, it was easy to philosophize in those times (the times of Renan and Taine) when France was great and powerful; but now after this defeat, philosophy pushes people into fatalism and despair. Everything is a consequence, and no help from any side. And again, in this poisoned youth we see a striving for work, the desire to save the people. (...)

Just as in the life of a nation one finds a conflict between philosophy and ordinary plebeian morale, so it is in the spiritual life of an individual. The young protagonist,

²⁵² German: Girl from Kola, you sleep

²⁵³ German: to the little Greta

physician Eugène Corbières, could have racked his brain about good and evil: is good really that which is good or is it merely a prejudice, upbringing, milieu, etc. He hasn't seen life yet. But he already felt the contradiction within himself: he doubts about good and evil and all the while he feels the need to create something and help the people. He doesn't know what good is, but feels the need to do it. And what happens when he feels in his soul that evil must be punished and the good rewarded? He sees that if there was no God, he couldn't save the man who got hurt because of him, and still he feels that this is nonsense, that he must be able to save that man. "If there is a God, if human activities have some other horizon except the earthly one, I should then do something for the salvation of the soul of that wretched creature."²⁵⁴

Slovenska Bistrica, Monday, 17 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)²⁵⁵

Continuation of the analysis of Bourget's work Le crime. Elaborates a motif from social life, gives a brief summary of the work and describes the personalities of key protagonists.

Slovenska Bistrica, Wednesday, 19 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Analysis of the state of mind, feelings of imperfection, desire for the Eucharist

Dead silence... this is how silent I am now. I would like to pray long; to pray with a pain in my soul, to pray to the One above to tear from my heart everything that binds me to earthliness; all that brutal egoism which always thinks only of itself. Oh, poor are the people who cannot stand to be alone. In the maelstrom of life, the mud sticks to you and unwittingly you start living in that earthliness.

It is arduous to be rich; it is necessary to give everything to another, and not only that, but we must be happy giving something to someone, even if that person is rude...*deberes te subicere omnibus*.²⁵⁶ But when I give, in my depths there is still that egoism which harbors second thoughts, which is angry at the one who asked, etc. Really terrible. The whole spiritual building is collapsing, coming down in dust...Yes, life is more than art, literature; for us people it is the only greatness, the source of everything.

How happy I am when I manage to extricate myself from these everyday little crosses and enjoy thoughts about the grandiose order of the macrocosm and the microcosm. The Earth is as if suspended in the air, in enormous distances there are those proud worlds; everything lives and bubbles. Then there are those tiny people who work (right now they reap and tie the sheaves), and the cicadas are competing with each other in the fields.

Then, there is love; a young man turns after a girl, and she is pretending not to look. Everything moves, lives, thrives – life is everywhere; and I, in the midst of this summer nature full of fruits, get angry at those who ask for a crown or two in the manner of some old philistine.

Oh, God, dear God, tear out from me all of this and make me a man, not a frog which eternally slithers in the mud.

When I think that this life is only a shadow, a hypothesis and nothing more, this is where I wonder at myself the most. In the evening when I lie down and penetrate into that grey darkness, I have the feeling that there is nothing inside of me, and I plunge deeper

²⁵⁴ This is the end of the 7th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary which covers the period from 7 March 1916 until 15 July 1916.

²⁵⁵ This is the beginning of the 8th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary which covers a period from 17 July until 28 December 1916.

²⁵⁶ Latin: a thought from *The Imitation of Christ*: you must subjugate yourself to everyone.

and deeper and search everywhere. And I cannot find anything. Everything is uncertain, but without any preceding thought there is that intense desire for bread, for that little Host. I know nothing then, my reason sleeps, while my mouth and all my inner being would like that Host, to unite itself with it. Really, I cannot fathom the greatness of it all. It is an instinct.

As I am learning a lot now, I observe myself in all the phases. Soon I will have this exam²⁵⁷, but I am always aware how far from perfection I am. I always try to be a master of the situation around me; I wish to get to know the people and observe their acts, as if it doesn't concern me, and occasionally I am overcome by some small fear, fear of the exam. What a weakness when I think of the generations that died without any remembrance; and still I fear.

Mud, dirty mud still hangs from me. It will take a great effort to wash it away. Why, why am I like that?! When I think that death will come and this body will rot away, and what I feel in my subconscious, that spiritual darkness which I barely feel will become huge and grand, full of light and perspective and fill the entire space.



Ivan (first to the right) with colleagues in the officer course in Slovenska Bistrica.

Slovenska Bistrica, Sunday, 23 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Criticizes the inhuman treatment of prisoners in “civilized” Europe

I have guard duty... Inside, in a small room one Russian prisoner with a large round face and small yellow moustache hangs with his arms tied to a stick. His eyes are blue. He tells me that there is no such punishment in Russia. My God, terrible. The “civilized” Europe is even less cultured than the previous centuries. And here we speak about the freedom of the spirit, about the individuality of a modern man, and at the same time this man is more limited than before.

²⁵⁷ Here he thinks of the final exam at the moment of death.

Why do they reproach Catholicism for supposedly enslaving individuality, for imposing dogmas which must be believed? In the meantime, Catholicism respects the one who doesn't do all that, understands the pains of a man who is spending his entire life seeking, while this modern Europe tyrannizes the spirit, subjugates it and commands. When this spirit rebels just a little bit, it is already hung on a stick, or as every line in the "rules of military service" says at the end, it "should be destroyed". People suffer a lot. A man who knows how to look at the magnificence of the night sky, the universe, to understand the course of history, this good man is being tied for nothing, for wanting to be free. This cultured, modern world has fallen into terrible decline; as if the end is approaching.

Slovenska Bistrica, Sunday, 23 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Philosophical and religious criticism of Bourget's work Le crime

I think that *Le crime* is not among Bourget's best works. (...) But, there is another trait which shows that this work is not the pinnacle of art. Turgenev in his *Home of the Gentry* and *Fathers and Children* knew how to suggest all his feelings and his philosophical conclusion. Bourget was not quite brilliantly successful in that. He wasn't capable of showing that grandness of the battle between philosophy and life, he wasn't capable of crystallizing from the grandiose vortex of life that mild world of religion which is always the same, which is raised above everything and is the only one which resolves the Faustian problem of "Why, how?" and gives us the only thing which we, modern people, lack: satisfaction. Bourget correctly drew the logical conclusion; I say "drew", whereas he should have presented it. Instead of narrating the conclusion to which the chief protagonist Corbière came, he should have shown all the spiritual crises due to the battle between philosophy and morality so that the conclusion crystallizes by itself. Admittedly, for those who have even a tiny speck of this religious life in themselves, the conclusion is natural; but I don't know whether any modern reader who suffers from Corbière's disease, comes to the correct result at the end of the work. I think that at the end of the plot his thinking comes to a halt and that human word "I don't know" bursts from his mouth. It shouldn't be like that; a bard, a poet who is looking upon the world in a special way, seeing what we ordinary mortals don't, must find that tendency which lies inside life and in everything that exists to bring the smallest and the greatest always to the same Source. (...)

Now, that I read some things all over again, especially the crying of the mother and son when everything was uncovered, I see that I was a bit too severe. Bourget did paint rather strongly this inimitable power of life; at the end one comes to the conclusion that there must be a way out and Corbière found this way in religion. (...)



Surroundings of Slovenska Bistrica

*Bourget's closeness to the Croatian reader,
psychological difference between the Croats and the Serbs*

Along with all his weaknesses, Bourget is especially dear to us because he knows how to uncover our secret corners of poetry and he paints the circumstances which correspond to the current cultural level of the Croats. Is there anyone among us who wasn't tormented by Eugène's thoughts, who didn't feel inside himself that contradiction between reason and feelings? Bourget was able to show in a beautiful way those evenings of youthful enthusiasm when, by the moonlight or with the twinkling of the stars the discussion steers to God, the morality of a nation, pain and future, and one remains with all that long into the night, until both, drunk with feelings return to their homes. Do the Serbs have this metaphysical understanding of life? I think they don't and herein lies the deepest difference in the psychology of the Croats and the Serbs! (...)

The poet – although a Catholic – still didn't arrive at that complete childlike faith and speaks like a man still on the crossroads: "I never knew whether among the people of my time was the one whom I regretted the most or whom I envied the most."

(Further on, there follow copious quotations from the work itself, the presentation of the content and a critical review of the key protagonists)

Slovenska Bistrica, Wednesday, 26 July 1916 – (19 years and 7 months)

Review, analysis and critique of Shakespeare's comedy The Merry Wives of Windsor

Mürzzuschlag, 15 August 1916 – (19 years and 8 months)

Inner crises and turbulence, doubts, everything is under a question mark

Pain, pain, pain. Either I am ill or this is again a lack of company so I cannot laugh heartily. I would be more than happy if I could cry like a baby or be cheerful and enthusiastic about some youthful ideals. I am always tormented by the problem of life; I am disgusted with my life as it is now, and in spite of all my striving to continually enjoy religion, I am not succeeding. I got up early, went to Communion and tried to delve into that mystery. I have the feeling of having penetrated rather deeply inside myself and inside that world. No, I didn't see everything, but it is as if I had felt, in a fog or something, those laws, that "something" which moves all, after that the Madonna with the Child, and along with that, I felt That which is even greater and is united with everything that I felt in the Host.

These are just moments, and the conviction that I could find complete satisfaction in some monastery didn't materialize. After that I am constantly pursued by some restlessness; I simply feel there must be something which will satisfy me.

I realize my weakness, my dependence. I am wondering how some time ago I could have been enthusiastic about art and the like; was that a mere self-deception? Life is more than all that, and I don't know how to live and do not find happiness in life. There, I am seeking satisfaction. Whenever I think of some work, on the creation of a work of art, any kind of art, a thought comes and says that it is nothing. Creation is an over-estimation of oneself; in reality man is terribly constrained, tied to society and what is worst of all, his genus.

I would gladly abandon myself to love knowing that it serves the procreation of mankind. At the same time, I made a decision not to look at girls for days, only to avoid that thought of fertilization, but still it pulls me, and I like to see a pretty face and to speak to her. And this is tormenting me terribly. I know that a woman will not give me the pleasure I am seeking, and still some volcanic power drives me towards her. What I detest in others, the addiction with regard to cigarettes, I see in myself. I abhor when I hear

colleagues speaking sensually about women, yet at the bottom of my soul I am the same. I feel like Whitman that desire to unite with a girl. I am disgusted at myself, I know nothing, everything is a question mark. I could say much more with regard to my sincerity. I am a little bit unnatural, etc. I must find myself female company and maybe I will regain my enthusiasm for life and art, maybe those sensual thoughts will vanish.

Pain, pain, pain, a sharp and black pain has come over me.



Mountain view upon Müritzschlag.

Mürzzuschlag, Saturday, 26 August 1916 – (19 years and 8 months)

Criticizes egoism and enslavement to bodily pleasures in colleague soldiers

An eternal battle, an eternal hunger is in me. I always seek the truth. I like it when I discover some new thought. Yes, it is a great joy. But it's a pity I do not find them often.

By all means, the most interesting is the milieu in which I live. I would gladly call everyone a beggar in the worst possible sense. The whole day somebody asks something from another; the issue of cigarettes actually shows that huge weakness of the modern man (among which – *mea culpa* – I belong too). The humiliation and the feeling of weakness of the one who constantly begs are plainly visible. And then, let's take Suljić for example, you can see on his face the instant of inner struggle when he suppresses a thought into the background and takes a cigarette from the box. Also with food you can see that huge egoism when everyone grabs irrespective of others. Even with those who are frequently hungry – Stibilj – I noticed how stingy they are when someone asks something from them. Then there are types like corporal Winkelbauer who in his childish arrogance stops his colleague lance corporal for not saluting. Admittedly, I am no better; if I had been in his shoes I don't know what I would have done. I cannot utter my sins, although I feel in almost every moment that I am sinning.

I almost forgot to mention my acquaintance with Stipe Filipović. I find him extremely interesting, then the climb to 2000 meters on the Rax, in the beautiful mountains of nature where the winds battle each other, and the terrible ravines open up underneath. On the way, I met Jagić and Rešetar. These Slavists speak about the "personenzug" (passenger train) and use a multitude of foreign words. (...)

The most important now is the problem of death and the possibility that he might die on the front lines

But the most important question for me now is the problem of death. And this issue must be the focus of my interest now, because in two months' time I could be far from this Earth. Actually, I now see that my life has no firm foundation. I created my ideology based on my future life, on future earthly happiness, and I cannot fathom that I could soon

be dead. This thought prompts me to think of death longer and to be prepared for it at any moment of my life. And what is death? (The Italians are making such noise, I cannot concentrate!) This is how I imagine it: I go to the front line, I am hit by a bullet during an assault (oh, God, who am I going to assault, oh, the terrible power which pushes mankind into those pains) and I drop dead. And so, all the hopes, all the ideals cease to be, and the Earth and the stars keep rushing on. And the soul? I must stop writing, although in certain moments I see that wonderful passage from this terribly limited world into that vast expanse. More about it another time.

Severely criticizes Whitman's immoral attitudes towards women and sexuality

Sexually I am still not completely at peace; but, it seems that I have outgrown Whitman²⁵⁸. He is a man like Rodin, who understood shallowly only this material world and its psyche. It is true that everything that exists is justified, but not everything is good. He enjoys the beautiful harmony in nature, in the beauty of fertilization and the birth of generations, in the beauty of the human body, etc. But, with that he forgets another completely different and much bigger world: the world of the human soul and everything that it encompasses. Yes, for Whitman nothing is immoral. But let him glance into the psyche of people who are suffering, who are ill due to a mental struggle because they lost their virginity and he will see that sexual drive is not the essence of human life and that nature is not like a sphynx who gives birth to itself, but that in its depths there is the Creator who gives life to the spirit of things (St. Augustine). Science, the arts, all of it is for him second-grade; for him the instinctive sexual life and giving birth is everything. Yes, I tried for a time to enjoy in a shapely girl, in the fullness of her health, and in myself I imagined all the phases from the kiss to the act of fertilization, and in that moment of unity, that great process of nature – as Whitman says – there was a feeling of inebriation. Yes, I admit, that is also a part of life, but what would it look like if I thought of the sexual act with every handsome woman I meet? Admittedly, it is easy to theorize about it. It would lead to a collapse not only of me, but of the whole state and morality in itself. What kind of state would it be if all the people would meet each other with such thoughts; this would be an insult to the inborn human dignity which resists the concept of an animal. As a matter of fact, this world which lies beyond the sensual is the real world, much bigger; this outer life is only a symbol of the spiritual one.

Lebring, 10 September 1916 – (19 years and 9 months)

Changeable moods, 500 soldiers under his command

In this military life, I jump from one milieu to another, and therefore the spiritual interests change. There, in Bistrica, I believe I lapsed into a healthy kind of pessimism: I became convinced that pain is the plough which ploughs mankind, and that life is the source of everything. Yes, the life of every individual, the will which subdues every cell in the body to bring it into harmony with the whole universe and that Spirit which moves all. In Mürzzuschlag, due to interest in the problems of life, and especially due to these sexual torments, I studied Whitman and St. Augustine. And now I feel stagnation in my soul because I am among the people so much that I roam between these barracks in the manner of an introverted philistine.

²⁵⁸ Walter "Walt" WHITMAN (1819–1892), an American poet, essayist and journalist. As a humanist he was the witness of the passage from transcendentalism into realism, both of which he integrated into his works. Whitman belongs among America's most influential poets, often labelled as the father of free verse. His work was highly controversial in his time, especially his poetry in the collection *Leaves of Grass*, which has been described as obscene due to excessive sexuality which is the topic of his poems.

Writing these words along with the speech of Arnautović, I live rather strangely. I came among the people and I feel like Nezhdanov²⁵⁹. I now have the power to deal with 500 of them, so I might be in the position to “help the people”. I don’t know what to do with them: I don’t usually moralize, and it would not be fitting to hold a literacy course. There, I talk to them, they tell me their pains, I am teaching some of them how to write.

My spiritual life is torn apart; as I read Carlyle, I see that he is the prophet of the 19th century.



Ivan (first from the left) as a young officer with his soldiers.

A MONTH’S MILITARY LEAVE

By the end of September 1916, after six months in the army, Ivan got a one-month leave. As he mentions in his Diary of 22 October 1916, that he used it to spend a week in Lebring, Banja Luka, Vienna, Pecs and again in Banja Luka, respectively, until the end of October. Everywhere except in Vienna he tried to keep his diary.

Banja Luka, Wednesday, 20 September 1916 – (19 years and 9 months)

Complains of inner torment, family life doesn’t suit him

Time flies like crazy. My entire life is torn apart; there is nowhere a place where I can recollect. I cannot complete a single sentence, not to mention pondering thoroughly over some matter. The very fact that on Saturday I went to Confession and missed receiving Communion on Sunday shows the torment in my soul. Along with that, Hamsun’s novel *Hunger* with some excessively erotic passages came into my hands at the wrong time. I need something which will unite my soul to the One and raise it, not to tear it apart and force me to go and battle for the hundredth time against my sensuality.

Actually, this family life doesn’t suit me. It is a terrible tyranny. One rises late – against nature, one eats too much, and lives every day equally like a machine. On the other

²⁵⁹ Nezhdanov is a literary character in Turgenev’s novel *Virgin Soil*. He harbors revolutionary ideas of a rebellion, guided by the idea: “It is better to perish in the work for the people, then achieve the greatest success on the literary field“. Merz extensively analyzed his character in his first study about Turgenev which he wrote in 1915.

hand, when I am by myself, even if hungry, I feel that I am fighting something, that I am alive and coming closer to Perfection. There the soul lives and observes, whereas here I do not feel this clear difference between body and soul.

Reproaches himself for behaving as he did towards the girl Zora

I am disgusted with myself. When I think how I talked to Zora²⁶⁰, wanting to touch her palm to palm only that her electricity may pass through me, or to achieve the same by a look. Strange, I felt a female beside me, and it never occurred to me that she might have the same spiritual interests as I did, that she enjoys being free, that she would like to study, that she is interested in natural sciences, arts, etc. Oh, how much I offended her. Yes, life is more than all the books. Here I know how to analyze all kinds of love and its essence, but when I come into contact with women, I behave according to the prejudices of my lowly milieu as ordinary wantons do.

Review and critique of the novel Hunger by Knut Hamsun

As I already said, I read Hamsun's²⁶¹ *Hunger*, a modern story which excited my unfortunate blood too much. I understand that Hamsun portrays a modern man – himself – in all his weaknesses, and reveals something from the sexual life as a very important factor; anyhow, I conclude by the effects that this is not for us ordinary people. I will not be touched in the least by Titian's beautiful nude, but, as I notice, I lose my cool even at the slightest description of these matters. And one should count with the fact that there are not many pure readers. Hamsun in his works always describes himself, a modern man, and so he does here too. (...)

So, the psyche of this disbeliever in moments of hunger and craziness is presented. (...) Hamsun showed that love is a force completely divorced from the milieu, outer appearance, etc. (...) I think that this love, as he describes it is too sensual; in real life, I would find it disgusting. And the woman is not here for the sake of love only; she is an *animal religiosum* too. One should only think of the spiritual greatness of nuns and their great work.

Banja Luka, 21 September 1916– (19 years and 9 months)

Final verdict on Hamsun's novel Hunger

Hunger is a psychological, or better to say, a pathological novel because it presents the illness of the soul of a modern disbeliever in whose head everything teems with feelings, memories, reproaches of conscience, instinctive anger, senseless self-criticism. (...)

(Here follow the quotations from the novel and a critique of the main protagonist)

Pecs, 22 October 1916 – (19 years and 10 months)

Final decision on studying what he wants, a glance at the future and what he intends to do

They gave me four weeks' leave. One week I was in Lebring, another in Banja Luka, yet another in Vienna and I am here now for the fourth week.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ As is visible from Ivan's Diary, he cultivated a close and friendly contact with the teacher Zora Habdija from Banja Luka and was contemplating a more serious relationship, which, however, did not transpire. They were writing to each other and in his archive, several of their letters are preserved which show how Ivan tried to bring her to a deeper religious life which she had neglected.

²⁶¹ Knut HAMSUN (1859–1952), Norwegian writer

²⁶² Ivan's father was temporarily posted in Pecs and Ivan came to visit him.

In Vienna I took the lecture notes and started to learn Roman law; all of a sudden, Kranjc came and persuaded my old man that it is silly to force someone to study something. All right, it is possible to persuade the old man. With mother, it goes much harder; she is not willing to let go of her prejudices against philosophers. In her view these are people who walk stooped, with old dusty hats, yellow sticks and an eternal pelerine. But, the dilemmas are over; I will take Romance languages and literature and German studies; and, as a side-occupation – Croatian. I still feel terrible in my soul: that damned living as a machine – eat, sleep and wander about without aim or thought. A man has an inborn tendency to create, to be absorbed by some matter around which, like the core of a mineral, everything concentrates, and not like this. I close my eyes, think about the process of thinking and seek to plunge into that other world; I search for the passage, the difference between the two. Then I look into this marvel of the universe where everything hangs and rushes, moves in that emptiness; then I get the fear of hell; at once I feel that this life is nothing, only a passing phase into that permanent life, when everything that is boiling in us becomes free and passes into that other world – for the moment these perspectives seem rather dark, but immensely deep – only then the real life begins. Thinking of this transience I lose the desire for study, literature, girl, everything. Only an ascetic, monastic life and the adoration of the Eucharist might give me pleasure. Everything else, I think not. What pleasure would I derive from collecting the works of art and the like while so many people are terribly hungry? How could I dare desire to live by myself in my little room deceiving myself all the while, not going into the world, not seeing its pains and getting to know its psyche? Which right do I have to enjoy art when the battle for bread and life in all its peculiarity, with all its pains, defeats and victories is the source of all poetry, as a matter of fact an inescapable need if we want to comprehend this life as a preparation, as one tortuous job whose reward is the Great One.

I don't know. I must get out of this dilemma. I think compromise will be the best; because surely our duty in this small piece of order which is called civilization, culture or else is to occupy ourselves with knowledge. Maybe the knowledge of good and evil, the striving for Eternity is the purpose of mankind and along with material worries every man has the task in his small branch (profession) to work for this knowledge. More in one profession, less in the other; but we think that in every profession pain must be the source of everything; where that is missing, I think the fruit is evil or at least lost in vain because it is not in harmony with the purpose of this life. And every effort must be in harmony with the idea of Everything.

In Vienna I saw *Rheingold*, Strindberg's *Friends* and in Urania *Wiener Volksmusik*. The first work I barely understood, because I couldn't read the text and even less prepare myself. (...)

(Here follows the review and critique of ethical attitudes and comment of Strindberg's drama Friends)

Compares the great names of history, as described by Thomas Carlyle, with Christian saints

I finally read Carlyle's *Heldenverehrung*. I agree with his judgement of history all the way to Luther, and with his general thoughts almost always. (...)

In continuation Merz briefly names the great names of history and their features as Carlyle elaborates on them: Dante, Shakespeare, Muhammed, Luther, Knox, Cromwell and others.

They are all great men. I admit it, but I hold that St. Francis of Assisi and those few missionaries who converted millions are much greater heroes. Social reform carried out by St. Francis, and the life of the founders of the other orders and martyrs – they are all much greater heroes as real people, not mere external personalities. Carlyle is like a butler who recognizes a king only by his cloak, not by his nature. Their ascetic life is greater heroism

than all the victories of Napoleon. And after all, why didn't he describe Jan Hus? (...) How about Christ? He keeps silent over him because surely, he feels he is not up to the task to speak about him.

I ought to treasure this book and peek into it more often. It has brilliant thoughts; at least everything is systematic and with a good layout, everywhere an inner connection can be seen.

Impressions about visit to Pecs and its sights

Tomorrow I am going home again. People are hungry everywhere, only here there is abundance. A lot of altered mosques. The Székesegyház church is very beautiful on the inside. A Romanesque style, four towers. Three naves, with an altar in the middle, so the people stand around it. A lot of marble, paintings all over. Golden and blue color, matt. Works of art *comme il faut*.²⁶³ All the paintings, all the interiors, the organ and mass itself are in beautiful harmony. All arts are interwoven like in a musical accord.

There are some old statues: Adam and epic stories, Adam and Eve, etc. executed in a Medieval manner. The head takes a third of the body, legs are parallel, imperfect nudes. An interesting illustration for the naive perception of the world in middle Ages is how the Three Wise Men sleep in one bed, one head on top of the other – of course they sleep with their crowns on – one above the other. We should marvel at the middle Ages; there were so many imperfect works of art – products of Christianity – and the people believed so deeply, while us, modern people who look every day at almost perfect products of religion, these striking confirmations of its truthfulness, we hardly even believe. Newspapers, railway, cities, they are all to blame. We are far removed from nature; we do not observe nor understand this “open miracle”, as Carlyle calls it.



The well-known church Székesegyház in Pecs

²⁶³ French. *Comme il faut* – as it should be

Banja Luka, 31 October 1916 – (19 years and 10 months)

Visits a Madrasah with a young Muslim priest

Life is strange; I now spend the whole day reading Balsac's *Le Cabinet des Intignes* with the intention of mastering French. I also read Nazor's *Gold-winged Duck*, an unsuccessful romantic-idyllic epos. I will say something about his mistakes another time.

I went with Jusuf into the Madrasah. A young Muslim priest speaks Arabic well, with a multitude of books. But, with all his religiosity and naive goodness he cannot be like our clerics. He smokes a lot, and then takes leave to see some Muslim girls. With him there was an Arab with beautiful black eyes, an elderly man. He was sitting on the ground making tea in his contraption. His Croatian is bad, so I didn't understand him well. By the looks he is a philosopher of some kind, because he always comes back to death and thoughts about the secrets of life.

Little Greta, where are you?...

Lebring, 11 November 1916 – (19 years and 11 months)

Remembers Greta again and mourns for her

I could weep out of love. Bitterly, bitterly; Oh, little Greta, if I could only see you, if we could be together to cry together long, long, long. Where are you? Come, let me see you, show yourself to me! I don't know what I am seeking of You. I am already a foreigner to every sensuality and I know what love is for, but still my soul seeks you, needs you; dives into darkness, longs for You and cries along the way. Where are you, little Greta? To be together and to cry – long, long, long.

Last night I dreamt of her; we were together, she was telling me in her dining room the cause of death. – Oh, what have you done, my God! She tells me she didn't have the opportunity here to unite with God... Poor little Greta; that cold stone with the inscription "Greta Teschner" – a terrible name; the stone where hardly a flower buds, is this all that remained of You?... May God be with You!

Now we ought to go again into that grey air, on the wet field and torture the poor people; father and son together. Terrible; what have the people done out of life! Generation after generation dies like that.



Ivan (second from the right) with his Banja Luka colleagues in Seewiesen

The Emperor has died, thoughts about the connection between suffering and ethics, criticizes Nietzsche

The day before yesterday the Emperor died. R. I. P.²⁶⁴

Life is the source of everything; pain, the most necessary essence of life, deeply ploughs through the soul and documents the existence of ethics. Where there is no pain and where everything is fed, it is there that ethical delusions are most clearly seen. Nietzsche and the like; it is easy to theorize about the strength of an individual to whom the weaker ones must submit, when there is no danger threatening him. But, let him go into an uncultured country where his life is hanging on a thin thread, he will instinctively strive for an ethical organization where, along with the strong individuals, there will be the weaker ones who will, with joint effort, each to his capacity, care about detailing this ethical organization.

Moral corruption of the modern man

I went astray; namely, I want to retell as soon as I can the narrative of a modern man, N. Steiger, a praised lyricist, etc., acquaintance of Jörgensen and other great men, agitator for peace (he was not on the front line!), social democrat (writes in Catholic papers), a man who finds the cause of war only in some individuals, etc. Yesterday as we were lying in our beds he started to tell the history of his loves and in connection with that, the origins of his art works. I mustn't repeat his words; I need only remind myself of the various sexual perversions of ancient Rome. (...) I don't know whether it is allowed at all to describe these perversions; I believe that even Noldin²⁶⁵ doesn't know them. (...) He claims that it takes him three days at the most to "open the eyes" of a woman. (...) He then told us who he has been with and in what way. I realized that 98% of modern society is in that circle; that married ladies yearn for such "love". (...) Enough about that; my words are rather pale, I didn't want it all to come to life, it could cause damage to myself and others.

How can a man fall so deeply, to become a beast?!

Yes, when I listened to these descriptions of "love", his dealings with women, it came into my consciousness that he is describing his, mine and everybody's mother, sister, etc. I was terrified. My God, how can a man fall so low... to become a beast, an animal and nothing more? Not only him; the whole of modern society is such. Nobody talks about motherhood; there is only talk about the so-called "optimistic outlook on life", the "understanding" of life, the "beauty" of life and, on top of everything, the "outpourings of love". From this narrative I got a compact, strong image of our society starting from ordinary simple town misses with lowered gaze to aristocratic "well versed" small ladies which are not blinded by "positive religion, which is a stupidity", but who have "opened their eyes" and "understood" the meaning of life. Everything around me is like that. (...) Yes, that is the soul of a modern man who wants to reform society!

"There is silence among the stars above and the graves below"²⁶⁶ (Goethe, *Symbolum*)

Don't they know that there exists a universe so great and magnificent, and that the One who conceived all that is even greater... Yes, yes, he will die, perish with all his loves. (...)

²⁶⁴ Latin: R. I. P. – Requiescat in pace – Rest in peace

²⁶⁵ Hieronymus [NOLDIN \(1838–1922\)](#), a renowned professor of moral theology in Innsbruck (Austria), author of *Summa theologiae moralis* (1904), authority in moral issues.

²⁶⁶ In original, Merz quoted this Goethe's verse in German: *Still ruhen oben die Sterne und unten die Gräber* (Goethe, *Symbolum*).

Seewiesen, 26 November 1916 – (19 years and 11 months)

All the history is written by blood, cultural values are the product of pain

Yesterday a man folded over and remained dead. Today I received Communion and came to the conclusion that all history is written in blood; that all the cultural values are the product of pain. Religion came into being and is necessary because of pain; pain saved man from dullness; it always instilled fear of an unknown and even greater pain.

Whoever wants to understand culture should suffer; not only in the soul but bodily as well. Terrible, horrible. The technicians sitting in their warm rooms may mock everything and deny God; but let them step into the fabric of life and let them suffer in body and soul, and I wonder if they will still say that is it stupid to stand in a cold church and look at the “silly motions” of a silent mass. And again, people stand here patiently, realizing that pain is necessary and that it is really nothing compared to Christ who showed us that, compared to eternity, this is nothing.

Seewiesen, Saturday, 9 December 1916 – (20 years)

*Battle against excessive dependence on food,
should admire the magnificence of all creation*

I walk to and fro in my little room and eat chocolate. Walking I contemplate what kind of creatures we humans are – slaves of the flesh. Always and again I undertake some kind of ascetic life, to eat only three times a day and not think of food the rest of the time; and always, as soon as I sense something in my suitcase – I take and eat. Of course, I always find an excuse.

We people are truly terrible; everything in our lives is turning around the flesh instead of doing it mechanically and always thinking or at least feeling the magnificence of the Creation and looking with open eyes at the forces which move life onwards. I keep telling myself that, but I know that tomorrow I will sin again.

Again, we are riding on skis.

In the continuation, Merz writes without commenting the words of a poem by Hans Steiger Sangen Geigen übern See (The violins were singing on the lake) for which music was written in 1913 by the young Czech-Jewish musician Erwin Schulhoff (born 1894, died in a Nazi camp in 1942). This song is played in concerts even today, and was popular already in Merz's time. It seems that the words of this poem found reflection in his soul which was under the impression of the beauty and mystery of Alpine nature in which he was staying at that time and which pushed his love feelings into the background. It seems that the author of the poem is the same H. Steiger about whom Merz writes in his Diary two weeks prior, on 23 November 1916, in whose company he was in Slovenska Bistrica for a time. Merz also wrote about the works of this colleague of his to Dr. Maraković in his letters from the battlefield.²⁶⁷

Seewiesen, 17 December 1916 – (20 years)

Through pain one sees everything differently

I am convinced that everything has a purpose; this work and the little sufferings of mine. Through pain one sees everything differently and understands the bitter word “life”.

²⁶⁷ Original words of Hansa Steiger's poem *Sangen Geigen übern See* with music by Erwin Schulhoff:

Sangen Geigen übern See... Halbvergessnes Liebesweh. –
Weiß nicht, wie der Klang verging. Lange ich in Träumen hing
lange Irgendwo ein Käuzlein rief. –Nacht und Wald und See so tief...
Alles wunderstill und sacht! Meine Seele trank die Nacht.

Kempis confirms this idea of mine: “Here, in the cross everything is contained and everything rests in dying.” (*The Imitation of Christ*, II, Chapter 12, verse 15); in addition, this is confirmed in many places by the Gospel, e.g. “Then, speaking to all, he said, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me’” (Lk 9, 23); and those immensely touching words: “Jesus answered, ‘Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.’” (Lk 9, 58).²⁶⁸ These words remind me so much of these times of war where people suffer like Christ did, and it shouldn’t be so. This is all due to bad people who are denying shelter, who prolong the war. The mystery of this life consists in perennial pain and suffering. Yes, it is easy for me to say so in a warm room full of money and loaded with food, while life means also the invisible, spiritual, devoid of anything transient. And Jesus told them: “Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic” (Lk 9, 3).

Continuing reflection on suffering which leads to religion

Yes, pain is the essence²⁶⁹ of life, it rules all, it is the beginning of all religions. Where there is no pain, we can be sure that there is no real life. Pain, this word so ordinary, means also not to have bread, be ill, be in constant mortal danger, carry a heavy load, be unjustly disregarded or punished; all of that is pain, all of that creates history and after various spiritual convulsions brings a part of humanity onto the right way.

The majority of mankind suffers: some more, some less, but suffering is always there. If it wasn’t for suffering, we simply couldn’t understand people going into temples, those cold and dark places, to pray. Yes, life, suffering brings them here with force and tells them that the body is nothing and that the grave is everyone’s future. With that they feel that with death the reward comes too. And precisely the people who suffered will know the best what pain, suffering is. It is a terrible thing. They are afraid of these bodily pains in this world, let alone the thoughts of suffering in purgatory or even hell. Yes, to someone who has not felt this long-lasting pain, pain which doesn’t leave him even in sleep and persecutes him like fate, these words will sound odd. Yes, a man who would want, like Prometheus, to renounce the respect of that higher power, is mercilessly thrown back at religion by this suffering and a living awareness of the after-life which is potentiated through pain.



Ivan with colleagues (first from the right) in Seewiesen on a skiing course, 23 July 1917

²⁶⁸ In the original of his Diary Merz quotes the Gospel and *The Imitation of Christ* in Latin.

²⁶⁹ The original word in the Diary is *sucus* (Latin)

New people and a new age emerging from the horrors of war and leading a deeper life

And that's why I love this present generation because it suffered and saw that life is a serious matter, not a toy and that to live means to make war. Yes, I love our warriors because they have seen what love is. This is a new, deep generation! Life is not so instinctive anymore; art and science are getting deep food. The universe is not any more a machine that turns without any purpose, and man the product of chance, because everything has its purpose; everything is ordered and precisely calculated. A man trots through nature, through this "open miracle" in the words of Carlyle, and wonders at everything that surrounds him and a holy fear envelops him in front of these great and wonderful works and he falls on his knees and prays obligingly. This humbleness, the mystical flower, is the fruit of this war; the man, aware of his weakness, knows that he can be killed any moment, and awaits his destiny like a fearful child.

This is a new age²⁷⁰ with new people who live the great life. Yes, life is the source of everything; compared to "*savoir vivre*"²⁷¹ art, science and all other products of the human mind are secondary; life is their source and their food; great persons are an inexhaustible source of poetry and they are the carriers of history. And the number of such great persons is relatively big, they created the cultural heritage which we use. Therefore, I place a *memento* to me and everybody: let us experience the deep and great life and let us be aware in every moment that we really exist and let us not oppose this harmony which reigns in the universe. This bodily affair is not life really; life is that dark invisible matter, full of depth and perspective which in chosen moments extends even more in order for us to feel that other great world, those irresistible forces which act and move all of this. Precisely in order to be able to plunge into that immeasurable universe and observe the outer life which surrounds us much more objectively, we must kill in us every passion and strive for an ascetic life. Whoever tried to go toward that aim at least a little bit will see, with great effort, life around him in a completely different light; he will feel much better the secret threads of sin that weave through the fabric of modern society and play the game of cat and mouse with it. I tell you, this is a great truth and the more ascetic our life is, the more these secret voices instruct us in the mystery of existence.

"Ah! I've done Philosophy,
I've finished Law and Medicine
and sadly, even Theology,
taken fierce pains from end to end..."²⁷²

Dear Faust, you could have studied more and by that route you will never arrive at the seed which holds everything.

"That I may understand whatever,
binds the world's innermost core together,
see all its workings and its seeds,
deal no more in words' empty reeds"²⁷³

²⁷⁰Already by the end of the first year of his stay in the army, Merz arrived at a certain understanding which will, after the end of the war, influence the change of his life. He described these changes in this part of the Diary in the entry of 17 December 1916. Later, he expanded this topic and prepared it as an article under the title *New Age* which was published after the war in the *Luč* magazine, No. 9-10, 1919, pp. 210-214. This was his first published work. In this entry, he mentions for the first time the expression "New Age" which will later become the title of the article. In Merz's Archive in Zagreb the original handwritten text of this article is kept. The article was published in its entirety in the 2nd volume of the Collected Works of Ivan Merz, pp. 17-22. In the following pages, we bring an extensive review of the creation of this article.

²⁷¹ French: to know how to live.

²⁷² W. Goethe, *Faust*, 1st part, verse 354, ff. (beginning, Faust in his room). In the original Diary Merz quotes these words in German:

"Habe nun, ach, die Philosophie, Juristerei und Medizin
und leider auch Theologie, durchaus studiert mit heissem Bemühen..."

Faust's work is only the work of the brain which must finally come to the realization of the Divine, but this is more of a "grey theory". Goethe should have sent Faust to the front lines and he would have returned with a much deeper notion of life. It is easy to die with the help of a poison from an ancient vial; but to suffer bodily torture and see that war and pain is the basic color of history and progress, that pain raised millions of people to their feet and toppled the thrones, that the pain of Christ's manhood showed the basic meaning of life and gave birth to the Divine Comedy, this is something that the wise Faust ought to realize.

Once again, when this war that makes great men passes (I will say something about the evil consequences later on), we shouldn't hold up in our warm rooms and tell stories of chivalry over a glass of wine. We must always be aware of the shortness of life and that this is only a minimal phase within eternity; so let us sweeten this short period with an ascetic life; let us make a vow like Trappists that we will always work on the perfection of ourselves and let us be sure that we shall create great works.

It is easy to write, but difficult to perform.

Beendet am Tage von Gretchens Geburtstage 1916.²⁷⁴

Seewiesen, 18 December 1916 – (20 years)

Sorrowful remembrances of Greta and description of new understanding after having experienced love

Today You are twenty! My God, how beautiful and healthy you are! You ought to get married. Maybe you already found a husband and I come like that hero in *Immensee* to visit you and on feeble hands I read to you that you still love me. Whom else would you love?! I remember how you told your mother – after the noisy officer company – that you prefer me among all the others, me, a 16-year old lad who wasn't thinking of love, but surrendered himself instinctively (maybe even too much) to that unknown force. If I were to meet You now, little Greta, I shouldn't kiss You as passionately, maybe I would sit at Your feet, place my head in Your lap and slowly weep. Time has made a completely different man out of me; this life is not any more the source of all pleasure, but rather a valley of tears. Yes, little Greta, you would weep too and realize that life is one great secret, ending with that dark grave.

Oh, yes, You already lie in there, maybe you have decayed entirely, everything has passed, as if it didn't exist. Oh, God, have mercy, how terrible it is. Why does it all perish, disappear, why are we being killed and new generations come after us? And again, the same game, and again death. Yes, my God, I understand you, life is – as you say – a brief severe temptation and only those who get over it step into a life full of splendor and colors.

Liebes Gretchen, bete für mich!²⁷⁵

In the evening deep and God-fearing thoughts come, and with the light of the day that mystical life vanishes and one loses almost completely that mysterious connection with the higher purpose and lives instinctively, instead of being aware in every moment of one's dependence with the harmony of the universe.

²⁷³ W. Goethe, *Faust*, 1st part, verse 382, ff. (beginning, Faust in his room). In the original Diary Merz quotes these words in German:

"Dass ich erkenne wass die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält,
Schau alle Wirkenskraft und Saamen, und zu nicht mehr in Worten kramen."

²⁷⁴ German: Completed on Greta's birthday 1916.

²⁷⁵ German: Dear little Greta, pray for me.

Seewiesen, Tuesday, 19 December 1916 – (20 years)

Review and critique of Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness

Tolstoy succeeded pretty well to dramatize this undramatic subject-matter, to introduce the chief protagonist into it, although he couldn't create a unity of action. (...) The chief protagonist is sin, or as the title says The Power of Darkness. Sin grows like a mountain stream which feeds on the snow from the mountain. It gets stronger and stronger until it carries everything on its path. (...)

Tolstoy has put on stage an open, brutal life and let it develop. There is no place here for moralizing. Life is the greatest teacher, theory is worthless, life shows with merciless inconsideration and by its consequences what is good, and what is evil. Everything is permeated by naive peasant logic. (...)

An interesting and successful issue here is the psychological problem of Confession.²⁷⁶ A man who is full of remorse, who is being killed by secret crimes is regenerated by openly confessing them. The end of the work can be seen as an apology of Confession.

(In the brackets marked by dots Merz presents a brief content of the work and a critique of the key characters and the manner in which Tolstoy elaborated the entire work)

Seewiesen, 28 December 1916 – (20 years)

Path to perfection leads through suffering

In *Österreichische Rundschau* I found an article by Dr. Z. Hadina *War and German Mysticism*. Here I found very characteristic sentences by Meister Eckhart, the greatest German mystic (around 1300):

“Remember all of you who think: the fastest horse who will lead you to perfection is suffering. Nothing is as bitter as suffering and nothing is as sweet as the moment after a man has suffered. The safest foundation on which perfection can rest is humbleness. Only the one whose bodily man was humiliated to the lowest level will rise with his spirit to the greatest of divine heights.” This is only a fitting addition for the *Mysterium crucis* (Mystery of the cross). And it truly is a Mystery!

Brief leave in Banja Luka, First Mass of his friend Bilogrivić, meeting with Zora and analysis of an awakened love feeling

I am still under the impression of my journey: the leave was beautiful, and went by so fast, I couldn't recollect all my impressions. And there were a whole lot of them: The First Mass by Bilogrivić²⁷⁷, the Communion with the Trappists and conversation with them and finally, what really left a deep trace in me, some feeling toward Zora which led me to a kiss.

The old wounds are being opened! As I was walking to and fro in the dark alley, I was overcome by an impulse to grab her and kiss her all over. I was entirely beside myself, and so was she. I felt she too was just waiting for me to do it, although it all came all of a sudden. A female is always passive.

I realized that a woman starts to kiss when you give her the motive. She was telling me about her solitude and incessant yearning for love, for someone who could guide her. She had no one who could do that, not even the right mother. She told me how she had

²⁷⁶ This is not Christian confession, but a public acknowledgement of his crimes in front of the whole village, which occurred after the perpetrator couldn't any more stand the pangs of conscience because the evil which he started was getting bigger and bigger. This was the beginning of his inner regeneration.

²⁷⁷ The priest Nikola Bilogrivić later became the parish priest of Banja Luka. After the Communists came to power he was shot in Banja Luka together with Feliks Niedzelski, an apostle of youth, in 1947.

been withdrawn into herself from childhood, how at a certain period she sought solace in religion, but now has built a wall of resignation and cold-heartedness.

I would be prepared to introduce her into our movement where she might find amusement and enthusiasm for work. But I myself am a theoretician and wouldn't satisfy her for sure. She was amazed by my stories about life and the mystery of pain and on my almost forgotten plans about a solemn Croatian drama. Yes, a woman is always overpowered when she is convinced that a husband is competent in what he is doing and that he could guide her. On the other hand, I am glad at seeing someone who understands me and listens with belief.

I don't know if this is love, but I think that without sensuality everything would fall through. I think I would never have loved Greta so much if we hadn't kissed with such volcanic force. So, everything was leading to this kiss just for me to show – although I am not in the clear about it – that will not coldly oppose that feeling. Is this love, this is a big question. I fear it might have been mere sensuality. In any case I hold that love could be born out of this; it depends only on her.

A man really harbors that yearning for a woman so I am not going to deny that feeling. It is only strange that this is the same feeling I was cherishing towards Greta, and it is now transferred to Zora. This shows that love needs something living, bodily. I am still not sure which side I will choose; to remain faithful to Greta and continue my spiritual relationship with her. For the moment, I will not undertake anything, I will let the events unfold as they please; the key thing is to maintain a moral independence.²⁷⁸



Ivan (fourth from the right, smiling) with fellow soldiers during military training in Graz.

²⁷⁸ This is the end of the 8th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 17 July until 28 December 1916.

ON THE ITALIAN BATTLEFIELD

1917 - 1918

*For the moment, we shall break the course of the Diary in order to complement it with other sources and get a fuller picture on the life of Ivan Merz on the battlefield at the beginning of 1917. The first three months of that year Ivan didn't keep the Diary, so that we have no information from him on where he was situated and what exactly he was doing. However, this void is being filled by two other sources: his correspondence with a friend, Nikola Bilogrivić and Dr. Ljubomir Maraković and the article *The Warrior from the White Mountains* (in Croatian) which was published ten years after Ivan's death, i.e. in 1938 in *Hrvatska prosvjeta* by his war colleague and superior officer Šime Cvitanović²⁷⁹. In this article the author described in detail the situation on the battlefield and how Merz coped with it. The article written by this true Croatian patriot, who was killed because of that in 1945, gives us important information on the general feelings of the Croats towards World War I in the last months under Austro-Hungarian rule. Here we also find important data about the social and political situation in which the Croats found themselves after the end of the war, about the importance of the Croatian Catholic Movement, about the striving of liberal circles to harm the Catholic Church, etc. The article is relatively long, but provides very interested reading. Of course, the central figure is Ivan Merz and his character which is portrayed very realistically, including numerous details which give us a rounded picture of Merz on the battlefield as his colleagues saw him.*

*The second source, a door into his spirituality in that period are his letters and postcards which he sent to the young priest in Banja Luka, Nikola Bilogrivić who was ordained by the end of 1916 and whose First Mass Merz attended when he was on leave from the army. Merz himself mentions that in his Diary entry of 28 December 1916. To this we should also add two letters to Dr. Ljubomir Maraković in which Merz gives precious data on the conception of his article *New Age*. It is precisely from these letters from the battlefield which were written very sincerely that we can get an even fuller picture of his spirituality, what he was experiencing and going through during these months when his Diary keeps silent. We see how he managed to stand upright, how he succeeded in overcoming the difficulties and remained in mastery of the situation especially with regard to his spiritual and religious attitudes.*

We reproduce firstly the article by Šime Cvitanović "Warrior from the White Mountains". The article was written from memory in 1938, i.e. ten years after Ivan Merz's death and 21 years after the events on the battlefield and his meetings with Ivan.

²⁷⁹ Dr. ŠIME CVITANOVIĆ, born in Sumartin on Brač Island in 1891, completed high school in Zagreb in 1912, studied medicine in Innsbruck and Graz, and specialized surgery in Zagreb. He as a member of the Croatian Catholic Movement and the Croatian People's Party. Until 1939 he worked as a physician and hospital directory in Glina, whereupon he was transferred to become hospital director in Gospić. In 1940, as a pronounced Croatian patriot he was imprisoned in Lepoglava and interned in Krušćica near Travnik. In April 1941, he returned to Zagreb where he served as director of the Rebro Hospital between 1942 and 1945. Before the occupation of Zagreb by communist-partisan forces, he escorted as a physician, on 7th May 1945, the train with wounded soldiers that were retreating. He was captured near Maribor. In July 1945, the communist regime sentenced him to death and he was shot in Zagreb on 10 November 1945. His grave remains unknown.

Warrior from the White Mountains

War memories of Dr. Ivan Merz

by Šime Lukin – Cvitanović

Hrvatska prosvjeta, Zagreb, 1938, No. 7/8, pp. 331–337

"Dosso del Fine, 1917 – a terrible winter – altitude 2021 m. The offensive of the Austrian heir apparent Karl²⁸⁰ ended miserably – Austria didn't get what she wanted – to conquer Italy by a thrust through the Italian lowlands. They switched the decimated Dalmatian and Bosnian battalions from Val Sugano, where they destroyed the second Italian army in the region of perennial ice and snow – Monte Zingarello, Monte Zebio, Cima Dodici. It so transpired that the headquarters of the 22nd Dalmatian regiment landed on Dosso del Fine. There is a path from Osteria del Termine to Dosso del Fine, but only up to an elevation of a thousand meters, and after that one goes through tunnels of snow, over the mountain ridges, always in a danger of avalanches. There were major changes at that time in the regiment command. Higher military authorities withdrew a good and old Viennese, Colonel Zechbauer, and sent us a court official, Colonel Wolf. This Wolf was until recently the leader of Austrian Monarchists, until Hitler put an end to that group. This malicious and incapable court official got into his hands the command of the regiment by the intercession of court ladies, and his goal was to advance his career over the blood of our battalions. At that time, I was on duty in the regiment headquarters as a communications officer – my life was hard, because I had to keep in touch with the battalions day and night and with the higher command behind us. I had to gather all the news, put them in order and submit them to Colonel Wolf. My subterranean shelter was at some distance from Colonel Wolf's shelter, so that I could work undisturbed, especially during the night, because that malicious court moron would hole up in his cave rather early, and especially at night never ventured outside. He knew that Dalmatian infantrymen are good marksmen after all.

Just at that time some of our men defected to the Italians – we knew already at that time of the existence of our expatriate circles. Every day at 4 p.m. I was receiving on Monte Salubio direct Italian press releases via our group's radio, and in addition I was getting news from the Thessalonian front sent to the press in London. Italian radio broadcasted all of this news, and as it was situated near our radio, we were eavesdropping on them. The court moron Wolf used to get fits of rage when some of our men defected; and as I was handling the post, I read his reports in which he called us traitors, rats, lazy animals, etc. The court ladies had to send these reports further on. The final demise of the Monarchy dragged on terribly in those days. We were in great pain knowing that our people back home suffered hunger, on the frontline we were sent to the most difficult places, and every suspicious move meant death. Those of us who inherited from our civilian life, from school, from our families a deep-seated hatred of Austria – we were crucified in our pain and there were no traces of liberation in sight. My inner turmoil was terrible. I was hiding my feelings as best as I could and was spending the nights, those terrible icy nights with a glass of rum with tea. Every now and then one of our people used

²⁸⁰ Karl von Habsburg – the last Austro-Hungarian Emperor and legal king of Croatia who ascended to the throne during the war and after the death of Emperor Franz Joseph. He did all in his powers to bring peace to war-torn Europe. He died in exile on Madeira in 1922. Pope John Paul II proclaimed him a Blessed in 2004.

to come to my shelter for a brief moment of conversation and solace. Sneaking around the regiment headquarters were Germanized Czech officers and Jews – all of them Italianized Croats from the surroundings of Trieste who savagely hated the very name “Croat” – all of them enjoyed the luxury of the shelter near the regiment administration and the headquarters. So, one day at the beginning of 1917, on a cold morning a young, thin cadet trainee called upon me.



Dosso del Fine in the Dolomites where Ivan stayed at the beginning of 1917 and where he got a poetic name “Warrior from the White Mountains”.

He wore the uniform of a Bosnian soldier with a tarboosh hat and a woolen scarf around the neck and he saluted in a strict military manner: “Lieutenant, cadet trainee Hans Merz is placing himself respectfully at your service!” I hardly glanced at him when I heard the name, and within me I murmured: again, one of them was sent to me to annoy me and eat my nerves! At that very moment the telephone from the second battalion rang with a report for the regiment headquarters. The telephone operator handed me the receiver and we started to write the telegram letter by letter. In the second battalion an adjutant was a certain Slovenian, a teacher from Ljubljana – he was far from us – and still further from Slavic love in which I myself never believed, especially looking at such Slav types of black and yellow (Austro-Hungarian) patriotism. The cadet remained at attention while I was receiving the telegram. I had almost forgotten about him, and when I raised my eyes I waved at him to stand at ease and ordered one soldier to take him to the telephone operators’ shelter to sergeant Kudrić and to give him tea with bread. I read the report about him that said that this thin cadet trainee Hans Merz is being assigned to me, and the report also said that he is an excellent skier and a good fighter on high mountains. The warrior from the white mountain – I ironized the new cadet within myself. Well, we shall see about that! – I said aloud when my soldier took him into the telephone operators’ shelter! At that time the regiment needed a lot of good skiers in the communication department because the avalanches used to break the telegraph lines, and then the news had to be delivered by the skiers.

I didn't allow the new cadet trainee to eat in the officers’ canteen because I thought he was not one of “ours”, but one of “theirs”, and I tried to stay consistent whenever I could. Every day, early in the morning the cadet had to report to me and I used to give him assignments – these were all difficult skiing assignments – but he completed everything without complaint, and proved to be very “tight” as we used to say in our military jargon. A real warrior from the white mountains. He completed the orders with precision, obligingly and without any protest, so he started to interest me more and more and I got to liking him. He was thin, had a rather long neck, long and shallow torso, supple joints and tender skin, and very little fat on him, tender muscles. I judged him medically on the

outside – physicians would call the bodies of such built asthenic, and as he was very precise I sometimes used him for the telephone jobs as well.



*Ivan in the middle with white cap at the beginning of 1917.
His task, as a skier, was to take troops to their positions.*

Among various special maps and sketches on my table in the shelter there was a small booklet written by a Spanish Jesuit Palau: *Catholic in Action*. This book was adapted for Croatian readers by the Archbishop of Sarajevo Ivan Ev. Šarić, and I myself got this copy from the regiment priest, a Franciscan. He told me that this was an attempt at a modern version of *The Imitation of Christ*. And this Spaniard really nicely and in an interesting way guides the reader through his meditations! In moments of rest I read also Cicero's *Disputationes tusculanae*, and after that, as I started reading this modern Catholic booklet I felt a different tone of life, thoughts and feelings. The new cadet one day saw this book on my table and in a proper military manner asked me if I would lend it to him. – You understand Croatian, Cadet? – Actually, very well, lieutenant! – answered the cadet trainee Hans Merz.

My eyes popped out at him. Who is this young man, where is he coming from, how did he get here?

– Where are you from?

– I completed high school in Banja Luka! Well, of course you can speak Croatian then.

I gave him the book.

That night I thought a lot about this thin cadet and smoking my pipe by the telephone made a string of wrong conclusions. He is probably the son of a high-ranking German official from Bosnia – I thought. These are the most dangerous ones – I must be on double caution. Then I continued thinking about him and finally, without my knowing why, these thoughts became an obsession. I was suspicious because of his name, that's why I planned to assign him to the headquarters sergeant Kudrić – who was my man – and he would know how to fix the young trainee. Then, a new thought popped into my mind – I knew that somewhere in Banja Luka there is a teacher, Dr. Lj. Maraković – an amiable

person among the pre-war teachers, who was one of the important ideologues of the young Croatian Catholic Students. What Dr. Maraković wrote in the *Luč* magazine was avidly read by the pupils at that time – including me. I will try and see if he knows our Dr. Ljubo – and if he doesn't, I will continue to beware of him and behave accordingly. Dr. Ljubo Maraković was at that time the cornerstone of the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization because nearly all the pupils were drafted into the army, into a war that wouldn't stop, and among the people new and important issues arose that had to be addressed, and there were no laborers. That morning when the cadet reported to me I asked him to sit and ordered a soldier to bring him tea with bread and butter from the officers' canteen, because I wanted to test him. The cadet enjoyed officer tea and ate the bread and butter with appetite. When he was done, I asked him straightforwardly, because I wanted to be in the clear:

– So, you completed high school in Banja Luka... And do you know the teacher Maraković?

– He was my teacher from the fifth grade on!

– And have you been in closer contact with him?

– Yes – from the organization²⁸¹! – he responded sincerely.

This sincerity shocked me. I immediately changed my opinion and the tone of speech.

– So, you are an organized Croatian Catholic Student?

– Yes, lieutenant!

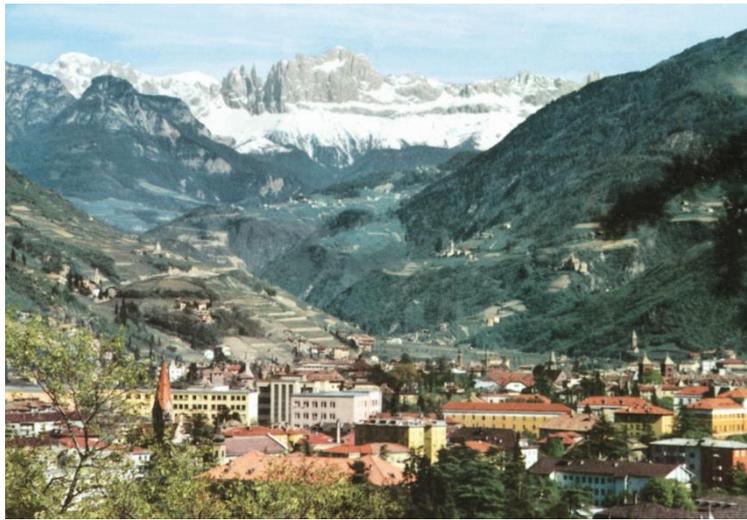
I got up, turned towards him and shook his hand.

– So, we belong to the same organization! From now on, outside of the service we are comrades, and to be even closer to each other, we will call each other by first names. Please, outside of the service call me a comrade, as is a tradition in our organization. The young cadet was transformed; he was happy as a child. He didn't know how to start talking to me; maybe it was too sudden for him to see the practical power of the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization.

Comrade, I said, from now on you are my guest here; admittedly, you still have no access to the officers' canteen, but I run it in a way, and from today on, you will get officer food here in my shelter. One of my soldiers will bring it to you, and I will arrange for a bed for you here beside me. You can thank for all of that to the fact that you are an organized Croatian Catholic Student and that you know our Ljubo Maraković who introduced you into our organization. We organized students must know our duty towards one another. This is how two unknown comrades met in Dosso del Fine, two members of the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization in order to help each other and to prove that the bond of this organization was strong at that time, that it was idealistic and unselfish.

The vicious winter of 1917 in Dosso del Fine made almost every movement impossible, but for the two of us it was since that time more pleasant and bearable. When Ivan had to take a telegram to some company or another headquarters, he would vanish like an arrow down the white slopes, and he would come back to the shelter frozen but happy, to warm up with a cup of tea with toast. I ironized him now, but not maliciously as before, and I would greet him: "warrior from the white mountains, come, have a cup of tea, rightly deserved by a mountain warrior!" He would laugh and tried to raise my spirits, because due to difficult circumstances I began to be desperate.

²⁸¹ Under the term "organization" Merz meant the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization, which was a part of a larger Croatian Catholic Movement initiated in 1903 by the bishop from Krk Antun Mahnić.



View of Bolzano (Bozen) where Ivan used to descend from the surrounding mountains into the Franciscan church for Mass, confession and Communion.

The picture of Croatia at that time was terrible and painful... Pre-war times gave birth to liberalism and progressivism and as a reaction to that the movement of the Croatian Catholic Students was formed. Progressivism and liberalism, assisted morally and financially by the Freemasonic lodges and other subversive elements took it as their main goal to destroy Catholicism in Croatian people. We knew exactly what their key aim was, because the entire Croatian people felt the fruits of this mean labor on their bloody backs. Everything was being thrown into battle, the Croats had to be slandered as backward, ultramontanist, servants of Austria – Catholicism had to be destroyed as the last obstacle *en route* to this goal. Many of those people are still today fighting for the same cause albeit under a different name.

The Starčević youth at that time was watered down, receiving amongst its ranks heaps of liberal yes-men who inflicted mortal wounds upon Croatia in 1918, and later even worse. Several of us in Zadar, for example, as early as 1910 had to destroy such a Starčević youth organization and urgently establish the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization; today we have proof that we were right, because many members of that former Starčević organization are now on the other side of the barricades and swim in suspicious waters. Some of them gave orders to shoot into the live flesh of their people in 1918, and what happened later, I better not even mention.

When the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization was born and made its first steps, the picture of Croatia was sad. This organization took it upon itself to educate the characters for future work among the people, and this could be achieved in only one way – to defend the organization which the progressives and liberals tried to destroy – the Church, to be educated by Her and within Her – and to serve their people. One of the strongest ideologues of this movement was Dr. Ljubo Maraković; that's why I wanted to hear from my new army comrade Ivan Merz everything that he had heard from that man, because the war was dragging on for too long and I lost touch with our members.



Franciscan church in Bolzano (Bozen) where Ivan used to come for confession and Communion at the beginning of 1917.

It stands written in my notes what the late Merz spoke about Dr. Maraković:

– He introduced me into another life – opened my eyes – he took the trouble to make us good laborers on the unplowed field of our miserable condition. From the fifth grade onwards, he was my teacher and my guide.

And really, the idea of our movement in the interpretation of Dr. Maraković had a great power. The proof of that was this young man who was not a Croat by birth, neither by his parentage, nor by tradition and whom Maraković won over for his cause. He did it by means of a great and righteous idea. Merz, of course, was no national revolutionary, as some wanted to represent him; it was enough that he became a loyal member of the Croatian people and worked unselfishly for the good of that people. He learned to be a Croat, so why give him the pretensions of a national revolutionary in any form when he would be an equally good German, Frenchman or Italian, had he been raised among those peoples. As it happened, he was recruited into the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization and, under the guidance of Dr. Maraković, became an exemplary member of the movement and by that very fact, a good Croat. It was a lucky set of circumstances that he came among us, became one of us, worked for us and therefore he is ours. The bonds of ideas are stronger than blood bonds, and these bonds tied him to the Croatian people embodied in the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization.

One terrible night while the storm was moving mountains of snow around us, we were sitting in the corner of our shelter and, by the fireplace, developed our favorite topic: what should our organization specifically do now?

– Dr. Maraković was creating an organization for the education of characters – said Merz.

– And as you were in his organization, you warrior from the white mountains – what does it follow from that? – I continued with a grin!

He blushed, as he was very humble.

– Speak, speak, cadet trainee!

– Well, he wanted to instill in us the notion of what it means to have character!

– You maneuvered your way out! – I laughed at his humbleness.

But he was reading every day the booklet *Catholic in Action* and not only reading, but he started to discuss it with me at length. I saw that this young man was on the right track to becoming a modern practical Catholic worker.

Then, on one difficult day the warrior from the white mountains had to go to Bozen, to take some report to a higher headquarters. I supplied him with additional rations while he tightened a rifle against his back, wrapped the scarf around his neck, stepped on the skis and disappeared over the white mountains like an arrow. I didn't note on which date this occurred, but when he came back several days later, he was elated. Contrary to that, I thought that I might have to hospitalize him.

– Why are you so happy? After such a strenuous task, I would collapse!

– Listen, in Bozen I found a Franciscan. He mentioned his name, but I didn't note it down; I only know that he was a professor of theology.²⁸²

Ivan made friends with him and confided to me that during all those days while he was in Bozen, this Franciscan exerted a great influence on him.

– He introduced me into the secrets of systematic meditation! I hardly even understood what he meant by that!

– But please, can you do one important thing for me?

– What?

– You have the authority, let me go to him to Bozen from time to time.

– How about colonel Wolf?

He pondered.

– You are the section commander, find me an opportunity!

He was begging with such a persuasion, that I couldn't refuse him. From then on I let him go to Bozen frequently, and he would come back happier every time.

– You know – he told me once – Dr. Maraković taught me to be systematic in everything; now I see the value of his words, since I established companionship with that Franciscan.

I must admit, there were times when it was hard for me to be without him, because our circumstances grew worse and worse. However, in spite of everything I always found a way to let him go to Bozen and to furnish him with food. Ivan used to go to Bozen every Sunday, and I managed to hide his absence from Colonel Wolf's eyes. The last topic which he shared with me before my departure from the regiment was the following: a man must be thorough in his profession, whatever this profession might be.



Cloister of the Franciscan monastery in Bolzano (Bozen) where Ivan met the Croatian Franciscan priest Vjenceslav Bart who then became his spiritual director during the war.

²⁸² This was Fr. Vjenceslav BARTA, OFM. Merz mentions him in another place in his Diary.

He talked a lot about this topic with the Franciscan priest and said that that will be his favorite topic which he will practically elaborate when the war is over. He said that he will now follow the instructions of Dr. Maraković with a new zeal, because it was only then that he fully understood him, as well as the Students' Organization through which our Dr. Ljubo Maraković tried to educate and create characters.

For me, however, circumstances in the regiment became terrible. The court moron Colonel Wolf wanted my scalp. I had to disappear from his view. They gave me a different posting. My farewell with Ivan was sorrowful. He came to love me as his brother because that is how I accepted him after learning that he belonged to the same organization as I did. Although he was not born in a peasant home as I was, he could understand to the minutest detail every political vibration of us common people, and realized that in this people the Church must be preserved at all costs. Without hesitation, he enrolled among the fighters who strived to preserve an unblemished notion of the Church, because this notion was the only guarantee of existence which Croatia had. He possessed enormous energy and a developed character. Everything he began he completed systematically.

The thin cadet, warrior from the white mountains, wanted to give me a token of his love when we parted, and gave me his dearest booklet: *The Imitation of Christ*. I still keep this booklet on which he wrote with his own hand: Hans Merz, Dosso del Fine, 19 February 1917, 6th Infantry Division, 3rd Corps, 11th Army. Whoever knows the late Merz, knows what this gift meant.

It was hard for us to part. He told me so many times to visit, if I ever manage, Dr. Maraković, his teacher. – I am thankful to him for everything – he used to say often – and he repeated those words also the last time when I descended from the white mountains down into the valley where he escorted me.

I became unreliable on the frontline, and therefore superfluous. They dispatched me into the Gyula Fehérvári fortress, present-day Alba Iulia, the domain of the Romanian peasants' tribune, Dr. Maniu. They liquidated me as they wanted!



Ivan's ski unit in a brief moment of rest. Ivan is first to the left (in the upper row).

But we are prone to forget things. So it came that people forgot that Merz was a spiritual child of Dr. Lj. Maraković, that he introduced him into the Croatian Catholic Movement and made him one of us! Why was that forgotten? For this reason, I decided to put down on paper what Merz told me, to retrieve it from oblivion. And then, when the chains were broken and the rotten Monarchy fell through, that structure built of the sighs

of the miserable, we met a long time after that in Zagreb. I was miserable again, because circumstances did not work in my favor. Liberalism brought up a generation of progressivist intelligentsia, which tried to strangle both Croatia and Catholicism. Our old comrades had to get to work as best as they could – always with pure intentions! They were necessary, very necessary, and this is being forgotten today! Maybe they helped to an extent, as much as they could! None of them made a career by working for the Movement. They were never after that anyway. *Servi inutiles sumus* (We are useless servants)²⁸³ – they would say of themselves – but they worked as best as they could and knew. This is what Merz has been telling me and it made me glad. He took me to his mother to show her, as he then said, his benefactor. I protested at being called by such majestic name, because I only considered myself to be his comrade. We were bound together by the ties of the Croatian Catholic National Student Organization, and these ties were strong and powerful – miracles happened.

Ten years have passed since his death. I wanted to write these few lines in order to put some things in their true perspective, things which, although they seem small, are nevertheless important also today. This is primarily the fact that one humble but strong man, Dr. Lj. Maraković introduced, inspired and educated the late Merz for the Croatian Catholic Movement and that this work means a new furrow in the field of Croatian nation which bore and continues to bear fruit.

The warrior from the white mountains – as I called him – will surely be thankful for these words by his war comrade because I mentioned some forgotten details on which the entire truth about him depends, and he always respected truth above all.

* * *

Correspondence with Dr. Lj. Maraković and friend N. Bilogrivić

Seewiesen, 6 February 1917

Admires the beauty of Alpine nature even on the battlefield, thinks of death

During the war, Ivan also kept a correspondence with his former teacher Dr. Maraković. A letter which he sent at the beginning of February 1917 fills a void at a time when he didn't keep the Diary. Ivan describes the environment and circumstances of his military life:

“We are only a couple of kilometers from the frontline; deep sound of cannon is heard at intervals – dumm – duuum. We are far from people at an altitude of 2050 m, surrounded by mountains a thousand meters higher. Ragged rocks, former coral islands (The Dolomites) jut vertically from the ground. Here we climb, look into the distance, far, far away into the empire of the mountains stretching all around us. The snow is deep, and we go everywhere on skis. Imagine the moonlight at such altitude; the mountains are like apparitions, and lonely firs are black, casting their sharp shadows on the silvery snow. One ought to see these Alpine beauties. Along with all this poetry I desire to have peace and to work. (...) I read Jorgensen, and then Dante's *New Life*. The problem (only the problem!) of love interested me, so now I am in the clear. I found here *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* (Turgenev) and I am reading it for the third time. It is strange how, at a different age,

²⁸³ Luke 17:10

one finds something else here; interests change during reading. Now, of course, I am mostly interested in the passages about death and I am amazed at how correctly he analyzes the feelings of the dying. The mood is so permeated by deep poetry that one unwittingly utters the words: *in valle lacrimarum* (in the valley of tears).”

Postcards to friend Bilogrivić

With his close friend, theology student Nikola Bilogrivić who was ordained a priest by the end of 1916, Merz was in written contact during his stay on the Italian battlefield; he was also present at Nikola's First Mass, as he mentions in his Diary of 28 December 1916. Their correspondence is preserved. From this material, we singled out several postcards²⁸⁴ which Ivan sent to his friend Nikola from the battlefield, describing his position and situation. The contents of these postcards complement what is lacking in Ivan's Diary from that period and provide us with a glimpse into Ivan's inner life, revealing the spiritual richness of his soul. They are a proof that he led an intensive spiritual life also on the battlefield and how he looked upon everything from a religious perspective, growing spiritually all the time. On the postcards Merz regularly left his address, and stated his rank "Cadet trainee, Mountain guide" and then the military postal address. Nikola Bilogrivić was at that time in the Sarajevo Seminary where he was completing his theology studies. On one postcard, which he sent to Nikola immediately after his First Mass, Merz, aware of the mortal danger in which he found himself the last few months, wrote about his eight diary notebooks which were kept at his parents' place in Banja Luka; he asked his friend to take them in case of his death. We understand from this fact that he valued his Diary, and only today we see how right he was. If it wasn't for his Diary we would never know many valuable details about his personality and the path which God chose to guide him toward sanctity.

Merz signed his letters and postcards with "Hans". This is the name given to him by his parents at baptism, and this is how everyone called him in Banja Luka. After the war, he signed letters with the Croatian version of his baptismal name – Ivan.

Seewiesen, Obersteiermark, 28 December 1916.

Instructions to a friend what to do with the Diary in case of his death

Dear Nina! As many have left this place and went to Tyrol, I am asking you, should anything "happen" to me, to take my diaries which are inside my desk (from the left side, middle drawer!) and are numerated with red ink from I to VIII. So, in case something "happens", take them as a present from me, so you can leaf through them with Marković. I believe that, along with high school stuff, your will find nice evaluations of different works and in the last (VIII) part maybe feel the breath of a new epoch in my life.

Regards for now

Ivan

St. Christina, Tyrol, 26 January 1917

A deep experience of piousness in the Franciscan church

Pax+ My dear Nina! Thank you for your card. It arrived... In Bozen (Bolzano) I liked it a lot. I got some idea of what the religious life in middle Ages was. On Sunday thousands of people went into the church (Franciscan!) and out. A real dense traffic.

²⁸⁴ From the battlefield, the soldiers were not allowed to send closed letters but only postcards which everyone could read. Therefore, Merz often used two or three postcards and sent them one after another in order to relate to his friend a broader content which could not be written on one card only.

Communion was being offered all the time. But, what impressed me the most is something I saw when, just before my leave – it was a working day – I went to the church to get rid of my sins and to receive the Greatest One who loves us weaklings so much. I never hoped to see such a scene, outside it was still dark, only here and there one could see a shrouded person hurrying somewhere. Otherwise it was silent. When I stepped into the great Baroque church, I was touched by the fact that the pews were full of people sitting motionless like ghosts; on all the altars, in front and on the sides (there are over a dozen) the friars with large tonsures celebrated masses in beautiful red mantles. Every little while on one of the altars tiny bells rang, and then at another altar the priest turned around and, spreading his arms, whispered: “*Dominus vobiscum*”.



Interior of the Franciscan church in Bolzano (Bozen) where Ivan went to Mass in the first months of 1917.

The church makes an indescribably deep impression when, along with the mystical glow of many, many candles this mystery of all the mysteries is being repeated at the same moment. And the people go in silence to the main altar where the priest in some black laced robe hands out the Lord's Bread.

The feeling is one of being on an island in the middle of a stormy sea; on an island of a true and real life. From those small women who suffered and understood in their lives the sphynx of life, there shines in those great moments, when they approach the Lord's Table, some supernatural light which fills the entire church with melodies of inaudible songs of the angels. I cannot find words to express how a religious environment has a positive effect on me!

Having said this I wish to comment on your thought about religious life in Banja Luka. You are right in saying that it is non-existent. One ought to have seen other, real religious places, in order to judge. In Banja Luka two-three women pray in the church due to old age, and that is all. Either that world didn't suffer and therefore doesn't understand or feel that great mystery of the transubstantiation, or maybe due to swearing – which is our biggest sin – is so bogged down that one great personality ought to come to save it.

Earlier I thought that our people were very religious, but I came to the conclusion that their religion is more a tradition inherited from our fathers. Imagine: here every town has its saint, real saints on whose intercession miracles happen; I was astonished, but it's true. And with us? It would be difficult to find someone who is a blessed. (Many say about Eckhart that he died as a saint! – by the way!) What are our churches like? It's a shame. I see here that even the smallest village has a church that could adorn Zagreb. Here are the artistic paintings, large organs and the rest.

Our people are probably like that due to the Turks. I am often with them; when I hear that they always have the same filthy things in their mouths, I think *odi profanum vulgus*²⁸⁵. It's a sin, but this pagan thought intrudes upon my mind.

I criticized others a lot, but I am eager to see what kind of a practical Catholic I am going to be in enduring these military pains. I often have death on my mind, and with all my belief in the afterlife I am overcome by fear. Pray for me, it will make it easier for me.

For the moment, it is all right with me in St. Kristina; I ride on skis a lot. I made good friends with a member of Domagoj, a friar in Bozen (Fr. Vjenceslav Barta)²⁸⁶. He is not a Bosnian friar. (You will understand!)

Keep these cards. Greetings Ivan

*Merz Hans, Bergführer Ersatz
K.U.K. Feldpostamt 605, Bozen, Tirol*

Dolomites, 28 March 1917

Celebration of White Sunday in sunny Alpine nature

+ Dear Nino,

The White Sunday dawned. The white regions of the Alps with their peaks and valleys are shining in their whiteness. Dark green pines rise majestically from the snow proud of their light-blue background. Light, light and brilliance everywhere. In the valley, there is a small chapel, covered by branches and in the front, there is a wooden cross. On the right under the rocks black from smoke, there are small barracks from which smoke emerges. In front of the chapel about twenty soldiers kneel: black, burned faces and dark raincoats...and the sun and light everywhere, brilliance, beauty, only these men are black and miserable.

They are receiving Communion. That small white Host, white and shining goes on this bright day to these dark exhausted people. They crossed their arms over their chests, lowered their heads to the ground and experience this Mystery within themselves.

All nature is wonderful, everything except man is happy and beautiful. This is what it looks like at first sight. Their soul is today cleaner and brighter than this enormous light of the Alpine Sunday; all this greatness of nature is only a symbol of the human soul. And this miserable, broken, black body doesn't really belong here, it must perish and come into harmony with the rest of the beauty.

I am all right. Regards Ivan

*K.U.K. Feldpostamt, 369, Infanteriergiment Graf von Lacy Nr. 22,
Merz Hans, Bergführer*

²⁸⁵ *Odi profanum vulgus* – a famous Latin saying of the Roman poet Horace with which he begins the third book of his *Odes* (III, 1,1). Translated literally it means "I hate the profane mob". The poet wanted to say that he despises uneducated folk which is incapable of understanding and enjoying the beauties of poetry.

²⁸⁶ Franciscan Fr. Vjenceslav BARTA, OFM, was a member of the North Croatian Franciscan Province of SS. Cyril and Methodius. During the war, he served as a military chaplain for Croatian soldiers on the Italian battlefield. He was staying during that time in the Franciscan Monastery in Bozen (Bolzano). He was a member of the Catholic Society *Domagoj* in Zagreb.



*Military chaplain celebrating Mass for the soldiers on the battlefield
(Ivan sent this photo as a postcard to his father on 2 April 1917)*

29 April 1917

Escorted Orthodox soldiers to receive Communion from their military priest

My dear Nina!

On a stormy lake, in a small boat the apostles feared for their lives. Jesus was with them, and they believed that He was asleep. Oh, how small was their faith! I myself, although I believe in everything and know that my present life and danger of death is that stormy lake, I still fear as if God had forgotten me and fell asleep. How small is my faith! He knows what will happen to me, and why am I still afraid of death?! It is miserable!

As there is no Catholic priest with the regiment, today I went to an Orthodox priest and took my men (Orthodox) to receive Communion. I was considering receiving Him myself, but when I saw that "atmosphere", I decided to wait and not go with the Orthodox company. Although I approached the Orthodox priest without any Bosnian prejudices, I found many things repulsive; there is not a trace of the mystical and deep faith. "It is hard for us priests, we must always speak the truth and be sincere" (isn't this true of everybody?). Or "If they want us to play truant, we shall play truant" and others. I don't intend to judge the man, but it is so characteristic of our Bosnian Orthodox priests.

I cannot tell you how sorry I am that the Churches are divided; this has a catastrophic impact on mankind! And here is something about our Bosniaks! I am overwhelmed with horror when I hear their speech, their songs. Everything is decadent in the worst possible sense; they feel and think decadently. I believe this is the bad influence of the Muslims who, due to the strictness of their laws, lost all contact with religion. Precisely because they transgressed the basic laws (pork, alcohol), I believe that a nation that swears so much doesn't deserve freedom. They ought to set up a lay order which will have as its task the suppression of swearing.

By all means, the war will not be over soon; the nations have not yet seen what life is and who is commanding up there.

Give my regards to everybody I know!

Ivan

Kdt. Asp. Merz Hans, Fr. 369,bh 2 R stab, Bergführer

The origins of the article “New Age”

At the end of 1916, living on the battlefield and in constant mortal danger, Merz was experiencing the situation in which he found himself, and which was filled with suffering, pain, fear and uncertainty. This prompted him to think seriously about it, and he noted his thoughts firstly in his Diary entry of 17 December 1916. Then he copied them down, edited a little bit and sent to his teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković. At that time, he didn't think that he might publish this material as an article. His very sincere cover letter sent to Dr. Maraković along with the article shows his strong inner need to share his thoughts and knowledge from the battlefield with someone, and the first was his former teacher. We are especially impressed by his words at the beginning of the letter when he said that this article is written “by his own blood”. Maraković responded with a postcard and proposed to publish this article, in other words something that Merz was not initially contemplating. However, he agreed with the suggestion and, through his friend Bilogrivić, asked that the article be returned to him, in order that he might prepare it for publication. We read about this on his postcard of 7 May 1917 sent to Bilogrivić who sent him this first draft back to the battlefield. At the end of 1917, staying in the location of Rocca in the Dolomites, as he mentions in his Diary from those days, Merz copied the article and gave the date of transcription: Rocca, 19 December 1917. Along with a copy of the manuscript Merz added a short letter to Bilogrivić which reads: “Dear Nina! I finally copied the manuscript. I am sending it to you for review and proofreading. I don't know where I shall be tomorrow. Cordial greetings, Hans – Rocca, 19 December 1917.

While the original text of the article is lost, the copy remains preserved and is kept in the Ivan Merz Archive in Zagreb.

After the war when Merz continued his studies in Vienna, in February of 1919 he read this article as a lecture in the renewed Academic Society “Croatia” in Vienna. As his biographers stress, those who listened to him on that occasion remained under a strong impression of his thoughts.²⁸⁷

The article was finally published in Luč magazine, No. 9-10, 1919, pp. 210-214. This was Merz's first published article. We can consider it to be his programmatic article for his further life because in it he indirectly announces that he is a participant of this “New Age” which starts with the end of World War I and all the misfortunes which occurred in that war.

As this article was written on the battlefield and “with his own blood”, it should be attached to Merz's Diary and published here. The article reveals the most intimate part of Merz's spirituality, what he was going through and what conclusions he made face to face with suffering and death during his stay in the army. He documents his new findings which will be relevant for his further life after the war.

Comparing this manuscript with the one published in Luč in 1919, we find some small variations and additions which do not substantially alter the content of the article and its message. The version published in Luči has been published again in the 2nd volume of Collected Works of Ivan Merz, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 17-22 (in Croatian).

Before the article itself, we bring the most important parts from two of Ivan's cover letters to Dr. Maraković connected to the article. We also added Ivan's postcard to his friend Bilogrivić from which it is visible how much he cared that the article be preserved. At the end, we publish the article according to the manuscript preserved from 1917.

²⁸⁷ Avelin Čepulić, *From the Student Days of Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Orlovska misao, No. 5, 1929.



The war zone in the Dolomites (Photo: I. Merz)

Seewiesen, January 1917 – (20 years and 1 month)

An article written by his own blood

Dear Ljuba! (...)

This article which I enclose is written “in my own blood” (allow me to express myself tragically). I am aware that it is written in a dry and bad style and that this topic should be elaborated much deeper. I wanted to illustrate all this and invigorate it with Dante’s verses, because he is the only poet who fully understood the meaning of pain, but I have no books at my disposal, and such a topic requires a lot of preparatory work. I also don’t have the time for that.

I wrote this simply because I had to. I was in a kind of craziness all the time; I had to explain to myself for the thousandth time the meaning of life when I saw one soldier slip off a rock into the abyss and remain dead. Also, when I had to observe with silence how this “cultured, emancipated” age hangs people by a stick.²⁸⁸

The thought that I might be sent at any moment to the frontline and suffer there, maybe even get killed, supported me in this work. I had to find my place in that world at all costs and justify to myself, or rather, prove to myself that everything is good and reasonable because it exists. The inner agitation and unconscious fear of death left me for a moment (or I imagine this to be) and I am suffering patiently and willingly everything that I am exposed to. With this article, I have made my peace with fate, for the time being.

I had lots of luck until now. Suljić already went to the field, and I slipped away from the infantry units. Some from my immediate surroundings already started going to Bozen, and of the Bosniaks there is no news yet. You see that I have all the luck I can take. I am ready to go every moment, but, thank God, nothing has been ordered yet. I was at home for Christmas. Bilogrivić had his First Mass and I spent nearly the whole day with the Trappist monks. Really, these people lead a great life. (...)

²⁸⁸ In his Diary of 23 July 1916 Merz mentions a case of a Russian prisoner whom the superior officers punished for some reason and he was hanged with his arms tied on a stick. Merz was on guard duty in that building, saw it, but couldn't help the prisoner. The only thing he did was a strong disapproval of this method, as he mentions in the Diary, and it is probable that he comforted the Russian with a word of solace, as is visible from his Diary entry from that date.

Dosso del Fine, 2 March 1917 – (20 years and 3 months)

The background of the article “New Age”

My dear teacher! Your card surprised me. I wrote that little piece firstly for my own sake, because I wanted to get straight with the life that grabbed me; I wanted to explain to myself that “everything is justified because it exists”. Only when it was written, I felt the urge to share it with someone, and naturally, this was you. If you think that it is appropriate for publication, I leave it entirely to you; if not, please keep it until I return from the battlefield. I have no duplicates.

There are no developments on the frontline; every day we witness aircraft battles. Shrapnel and bullets fly our way frequently, but there is no real danger for now.

Good bye!

Ivan

Zingarella, 7 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Concern for the manuscript “New Age”

+ Dear Nikolo!²⁸⁹ Now that you are in Ljubo’s vicinity²⁹⁰, ask him to give you my article *New Age*, take it to Banja Luka and give it to my parents – if you find them at home – if not you keep it and pray to God that we meet as soon as possible.

Of course, I remember Horvat; when we were visiting the Trappist monks, he was brave enough and took into his hands the electricity-producing machine. I didn’t dare. (...) Otherwise, pretty bad; the people are demoralized.

Ivan

Sent by: Merz Hans, Kadett-Asp. Bergführer, Feldpost 369, bh 2, Rstab



*Austrian army in front of the barracks in Dolomites before going to the frontline in 1917
(Photo: I. Merz)*

²⁸⁹ Nikola Bilogrović

²⁹⁰ Nikola Bilogrović was at that time in Sarajevo, completing his theology studies, and Dr. Ljubomir Maraković (Ljuba) was also in Sarajevo, assigned to a government office.

THE ARTICLE “NEW AGE”

(Copy of the manuscript of 19 December 1917)

*Ecce in cruce totum constat
et in moriendo totum iacet.
De Im. Chr., II. 12.²⁹¹*

Life is terrible; pain, suffering and evil permeate it in eternal variations and give it their mark. Where pain disappears, life vanishes too – this is when doubts and sin are born. All of this is confirmed by the great epochs in the development of mankind and great works of art. They are the reflection of pain and by them we can judge how and how much the people were suffering at that time.

When mankind acquired sufficient means for a comfortable material life, and the struggle for survival subsided, the pain of the spirit was born. This, in turn, by means of thinking, arrives at a realization of the tragedy of human life: a lack of understanding and the horror of sin. The periods which represent this life view are decadent.²⁹²

Pain is always present in the world. Just like the waves of the sea caress the coast at times of silence, and when the storm comes, they flood and take apart everything, so does pain. At times of peace it affects those who are nearest to it, and when a storm hits mankind, then the pain flows all over and shakes everything, both near and far. Whoever entered in the workers' apartments and observed a gradual dying of the living, unfortunate people is sufficiently convinced in that. And what is the situation now?



The wounded on the battlefield of World War I (Photo: I. Merz)

War rages like a storm, a hot, red blood is streaming from the wounds of living people who, in their moments of agony cry for their distant mother and try to muster the grains of faith which, in the hurry of the world, they have long forgotten. Poor people, without roof and shelter, often without a cover, brave the elements of nature: rain, snow, cold and hunger. These people on the battlefields said good-bye to this life long ago and go into the jaws of death with only a slight fear. And what to say of those who suffer

²⁹¹ *The Imitation of Christ*: Everything is in the cross and everything rests in dying (Book II., Ch. 12, line 15)

²⁹² In the Christian sense

hunger and remain home full of sorrow and fear for those who are in danger? How many people are there who knew only pleasure, but were shaken by this pain which gave their thoughts a completely new direction?

Pain has created and creates new generations.

All history is written by blood. The creations of the human mind, the culture, even religions which are the most important factors in the development of mankind, just like the Jewish religion and Christianity, are the products of people who suffer. Pain saved man from dullness and instilled in his heart the fear of an even greater and unknown pain. Who wants to understand the purpose of life, at least to an extent, and also understand culture, must suffer in body and soul. Theoreticians, sitting in a warm, brightly lit room at a filling meal, have everything that pleases the body but will never understand the idea of life. Religion with all its dogmas and rituals will remain a mystery to them, and they will never understand that rational beings go into dark, cold temples, and, humbling themselves to the extreme, pray kneeling on the hard, stone floor. But, let them step into the real life, the rainy nights without shelter, in a terrible darkness, hungry and thirsty. Let them climb the gorges above abysses into which they can plunge at any moment, let them see a hundred dismembered bodies which lie motionless like logs, or let them listen to the cries of the wounded from whose flesh the red blood flows, and whose eyes wonder in a daze, seeking something beyond grasp. I don't know if they will then dare conclude that "a man is the product of necessity, an eternal music of the universe, only a monotonous rattle of a huge mill powered by the electricity of chance, a mill without his maker and miller, a real *perpetuum mobile*, a mill that mills by itself" (Novalis). Those who do not change their views will at least keep silent, and like in Kranjčević's last Adam the big question mark will always hover in front of their eyes...

We should approach life naked: "Without a bag for the journey, or extra tunic or sandals or the staff" (Matthew 10:10), fight with nature as a primeval man and come out victorious. Only then will one see that life is not a philosophical system created in a library or a laboratory, but one very serious and real thing that one must get to know in person.

The life of Christ himself who went through the battle for the entire human race and the pain of the entire history shows that the meaning of life is pain: *mysterium crucis*. The Gospel and the development of Christianity are epic stories of pain. The lives of great individuals are only verses in this grand poem. "Whoever wants to be my disciple, must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). A little further on, there are even more touching words which stress the tragic nature of human life, the words of the man of pain: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

How many generations have lived in the dawn of time, who felt this pain? So many people have experienced even today in themselves this part of history; they understood that this is a key chapter in the life of Christ. All history, the present life of mankind and individuals is interwoven by similar motifs like a mosaic. To live deeply means "To take up your cross daily" (Luke 9:23).

I love the people of the present generation, those who suffered and realized the seriousness of life. They practically resolved the Faustian problem. Namely, all philosophizing is useless if done in a comfortable gothic room by the moonlight; in this manner, the sphynx of life cannot be fathomed. It is easy to say:

*"Habe nun ach! Philosophie, Juristerei und Medizin
Und leider auch Theologie Durchaus studiert mit heissen Bemüh'n."
(Goethe, Faust)²⁹³*

²⁹³ "Ah! I've done Philosophy, I've finished Law and Medicine, and sadly even Theology: taken fierce pains from end to end..." W. Goethe, *Faust*, 1st Part, verses 354 ff.

It is even easier, equipped with all the means, to enter the maelstrom of life and seduce an innocent girl. But if Faust had had to fight for his daily bread or if he had lived through the pain of war in all its phases, he would certainly have come to the result to which many unknown people came; people who carried on their shoulders all the burden of history, dying, dying anonymously.

It is not some great thing to sit in a warm room, surrounded by old skulls and without pain pass into the other world drinking poison from an antique vial; it is quite another to suffer and fight, and at the same time fight with oneself. Only then does one notice that pain is the juice of history which takes us from one epoch to another; which raises millions on their feet, creates nations, topples thrones and very effectively crushes sin. The death of Christ and the history of Christianity confirm this thought in reality and symbolically.



Ivan – officer in World War I

Today's pain will also instill in the present generation its eternal stamp. One can already see the traces of new people who are going through the deep and great life within themselves.

The life of an individual is the source of everything. Compared to it, art and science and everything else are secondary. The art of life or wisdom as the Old ones called it is the thread that weaves its way throughout history. It created states and put its stamp in all the branches of culture. Great persons who were able to live deeply and unselfishly even in the minutest moments of life, in spite of all the contrary strivings of the body and temporality, are the inexhaustible and only workers on the building of mankind. They are the creators of positive history. Such persons exist always, they act publicly or unnoticed. All the culture, all the heritage of the human spirit is their work.

The ethical side of life is becoming actual. Esthetic questions are in the background because we are dealing with life and death, self-sacrifice, self-denial and heroism. Dante's terrible pictures, full of reality and truth: dismembered corpses, hunger, blood and skulls filled the earth and present-day person must come to terms with all that: to understand the purpose of these horrors and integrate them into his world-view. Esthetic questions will be born as the necessary consequence of all these momentous problems; but this will not be an easy and pretty play, *l'art pour l'art* that was created by the artist in a splendid atelier or an ornate park, without any deeper experience. An artist is not a bird that sings when it

wants, but a priest, a prophet, a superhuman being who promotes the ideas of the world and like the Arch-artist creates the microcosms, the worlds unto themselves. They are in harmony with the rest of the universe; they reveal to the non-artist the great works and their ideas. It is blood and tears which usually drive the artist into his working temple.

If we want to have a great state, great epochs and great works and fulfil our assignment in history, we need equally great persons. This was said touchingly by Varga in his *Artist of the Eternal Pen*, and Carlyle has similar thoughts: "Because to live in this world is a very serious matter, death is no joke for a human, life was never a toy, it was harsh reality and a very serious matter." Aware of that, we shall understand life and we shall understand that there are people who renounce the world and life ascetically, in contemplation, and find happiness. For us too, the universe must be the monastery, workshop and temple.

It is not so terrible and devoid of color as it seems at first instance; one ought only to try to live in such a way in order to discover a life full of happiness, work and splendor. – We will be happy looking upon this visible world, the dignity of man and the supernatural beauty of pain which makes man the ruler of temporality, and we will feel happiness at its deepest diving into ourselves, into that other, broad, spiritual world, full of perspective and color which Novalis wrote about in such a beautiful way and which is the abode of the mystics. This life of the soul is truly that real, unchangeable, eternal life which doesn't know the beginning or end. For us, ordinary humans it is too dark, we are barely aware of it, but the more ethically we live, the greater our perspectives will be.

Humans are terribly weak and can do little without somebody's help. For that reason, He stepped from eternity into history and, having become the center of entire macrocosm, gave us Himself in order to transform us p h y s i c a l l y and spiritually. Let us not forget this immeasurable love and let us devote a greater attention to the small, white Host which waits upon us alone in cold churches. The world goes on living as if this miracle of miracles never happened, the miracle upon which with a huge yearning the whole macrocosm has been waiting for eons (Solovyov!).

Whoever lived or at least tried to live in this way surely perceived the world in a completely different light and felt clearly the terrible threads of sin into which the present-day society got entangled. We must suffer a lot of pain (pain is no joke!) in order to perfect ourselves at least up to a point; on every step a lot of tears will be shed, and a lot of blood, but without pain and toil there is no life. The German mystic Tauler says: "Remember well, you people who think, the swiftest horse which carries you to perfection is suffering."

We must take advantage of this great epoch; we ought to educate great persons who will establish a great homeland. We must liberate our spirit from the temporality and with a clear look observe the evolution of life. This ought to be the goal of new people. Battle for perfection, asceticism must be our daily bread. It opens the inner vistas, makes us unselfish, supports in us the battle against evil and gives us strength to endure. Asceticism gives us the power to withstand pain and protects us from pessimism which unfortunately was insurmountable for many already at the first difficulty.

Due to completely new circumstances which appeared during this war, various frictions appeared in our public life. They are characteristic for transitional epochs. But we immediately felt the spirit of the new age because we really live strongly. However, some borders were crossed: instead of unconditionally necessary discussions, unnecessary quarrels were born. The spirit of weakness sneaked into our ranks; ephemeral political issues divided us. We forgot the cosmopolitanism of the Church and its path through the centuries, along with its developed political program²⁹⁴ which is based on the teachings of Christ. National egoism sneaked into enflamed spirits as they forgot all humbleness and

²⁹⁴ Cf. The discussion in "Čas": *Respublica christiana*. XI. letnik, Zvezak 4–5 (in Slovenian).

self-denial and began to demonstrate to the world their virtues while at the same time exposing to those whom they do not even respect the drawbacks of their closest brothers. Instead of building further, we started to demolish what we built together with great pain.

We must therefore dedicate all our attention to the education of ourselves and to the study of Catholicism which we are, unfortunately, ignorant of, like some elementary school pupils.

To create great people is the aim of the national Catholic Movement because they will be the only ones who will know how to cope with difficulty and will withstand with some inner joy the pain which is the accompaniment of every development, every epoch, every deepest artistic creation. *In cruce totum constat et in moriendo totum iacet.*²⁹⁵

Rocca, 19 December 1917

Continuation of the War Diary

Zingarella, 31 March 1917 – (20 years and 3 months)²⁹⁶

Bad situation on the battlefield

War cannot last long. One old man from Sinj was telling me that they wrote to him from home how in one house nine people died of hunger. Nina²⁹⁷ put the following note between the lines: “People are hungry here. Between Pale and Višegrad they are dying of hunger.” Along with that, some days ago, two sergeants fled to the Italians and left a letter encouraging others to follow their suit. War has dragged on for too long, and the army doesn’t see why it is fighting at all. Along with that, the news from home is lethal. Political circumstances, especially the plan of the Germans to impose German as the state language also has a bad effect on people. People are hungry here; today we didn’t even have corn bread, but only toast.



Area in the Dolomites where Ivan moved during World War I

Review and critique of the novel The Way of Love of the Czech Catholic writer I. Baar

This is the work of the Czech Catholic modern manner. Nothing especially new. The motif, idea – *mysterium crucis* – is great, but the elaboration is too fragmented. (...) In this age, when liberalism triumphs, the Catholic spiritual life should penetrate through this current in order to emerge clear and new, completely new and great. One should only take

²⁹⁵ Cf. Footnote at the beginning of this text

²⁹⁶ Here begins the 9th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 31 March until 5 May 1917.

²⁹⁷ "Nina" is the nickname by which Merz called his friend, Fr. Nikola Bilogrivić.

into one's hands Verlaine, Huysmans, Jørgensen and others in order to see that Catholicism is an inexhaustible source of poetry, that modern Catholics – the key protagonists – are completely new people who, along with all the modern education, have a naive, deep faith which they deepen even more by studying the arts and the lives of great Christian personalities.

And what do we have here? Not a single scene of religious life, not a single prayer. All religious life is portrayed in such a conventional manner, applicable for a peasant or some indifferent Christian. (...)

For this reason, I ought to say that this is not a novel, and has no place in artistic literature, but belongs to the cultural history books from the life of the Church, illustrating one scene from the epopee of a toilsome life of a priest. The motto to this epopee could be Christ's words: "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end, will be saved."

I must also make a comment about the technique. The psychological analysis of pain is very successful, and this gives value to the work. Throughout the work, we feel the mystery of pain, that terrible force which documents life as a way of the cross. The pain of the mother who grew old hoping, and didn't have one single happy moment, just like Đuro. Observing this life, we unwittingly come to the idea about the ethical necessity of another life. However, the writer should have stressed that thought from the beginning, continuing in stronger and stronger tones, until at the end it would find its culmination in the words "I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting". This would be a crescendo that would find its finale as if in a tower, the strong culmination after which only peace and our contemplation follows. A work of art must be a building where every pillar, every move and every embellishment is art in itself, and all together it stands in harmony and expresses a single thought. (...)

(Here follows the further analysis of the work according to the criteria which he used for other works: idea, content, characters, details. Then he gives a brief content of the work and analysis of key protagonists)

Zingarella, 10 April 1917 – (20 years and 4 months)

Review and analysis of the work For Bread by Henryk Sienkiewicz

A social story with an artistic tendency, whose aim is to avert the Poles from emigrating. (...) Otherwise, very picturesque; we see his village, voyage across the sea, storm. New York harbor, Boarding House, steppe and wilderness, flood and the last scenes. Patriotism permeates the work with poetry and gives it value. Otherwise, it is not some great work. (...)

Zingarella, 15 April 1917 – (20 years and 4 months)

Disappointed with Bosniaks, prays to God for the strength for going through life

It rains and snows outside. I don't have the real feeling for nature since I have been in the position to fight it. Along with that there is the weakness: fear to be thrown into battle as soon as the snow melts. Lately, I myself don't know how I live. The connection with God has weakened. I was looking forward too much to the arrival of the Bosniaks Suljić, Mujagić, and I was disappointed. We were separated long in the world and our views and characters have parted. I was sad, because, God, where You are not present, there is no joy.

Strength, strength, strength!!! Whom should I fear when we are merely passengers here, and for us it is a matter of pride to fight our way through life and gather our riches for that great LIFE.

Strength and again strength, this is what I ask of You!

Zingarella, 17 April 1917 – (20 years and 4 months)

Reflections on his state of mind with which he is not satisfied, and dilemmas about the justification of war, resistance and revolution

The Italians were shooting a lot. When a cannon booms, I have the feeling that St. Francis is preaching to me: *advenae et peregrini sumus*.²⁹⁸ I see that in this army I am losing my soul. Do I have the right to resist with force the one who wants to tear my soul to pieces? Is revolution justified? “If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also!” Humility – revolution, I don’t see how they go together. I am only convinced that war is not modern, because the enmity between the nations doesn’t exist in reality, but only the enmity between the classes. Modern war is revolution.

*An extensive review of the novel The Precipice by Ivan A. Goncharov*²⁹⁹

A real Russian naturalist novel (...) Russia in the last century gave birth to a certain class of people – Russian Hamlets, or if we want to be more precise – anarchists in the best sense of the term. Anarchist men and women; people dissatisfied with the social circumstances, who analyze them and combat against every tradition and every notion of duty. These unfortunate people are typical of a modern novel. (...) Goncharov was interested in the problem of a woman named Vera. This problem can be rightly called by that name, because he was the first who artistically solved it. The problem is eternal and there will always be women who will want to break the chains of social conventions in order to arrive at the true and real notion of love, marriage and other female issues. Therefore, some kind of female Faust, a Russian female Faust, because we find also traces of theoretical nihilism. (resisting the babushka, a certain conceit in contact with older generation).

Vera – a female Russian Faust

The main protagonist in the novel is Vera and the narrator has used all his means to illustrate her. (...) Vera doesn’t live as other women do. She examines her being and all the traditional values of modern society. She is always alone with her books in an old castle and in nature, and comes to the bitter conclusion that a woman today is not free. Everybody is looking at her only physically, watching and spying, not letting her live by herself with her views. (...) The narrator has used all the power of psychological analysis to show the brutal power of passion. Passion knows no logic or sophism, doesn’t know what prejudice is, nor decency, society, upbringing, beauty of character. It is there and seeks its victim. Who would say that our dear Vera, whom we have grown to love so much, will surrender herself to a man. (...) Passion has triumphed against all logic, thoughts, etc. There occurs a reaction in Vera’s soul; without knowing why, she knows that she has sinned. She suffers spiritually, almost dies. (...) The consequence of sin seeks the victim with all its power and documents that love is not a fleeting passion, but something that involves duties as well.

The technique of the work is excellent, and typically Russian. There is the psychology of speech and responses, pre-history, and other. A vivid description of the village milieu full of old women, misers, well-meaning people, servants and other. (...)

(Here follows a very extensive account of the whole work, with numerous quotations of dialogues and analysis of the personalities in the novel)

²⁹⁸ Latin: we are newcomers and passengers (thought from *The Imitation of Christ*).

²⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that Merz wrote an extensive review of this novel in his Diary using the Cyrillic script. Probably he read it in a Serbian translation. This is the only entry in the entire Diary written in this script. He had to know it because he learnt it in the school in Banja Luka.

Zingarella, 20. IV. 1917. – (20 g. i 4 mj.)

Feels the need for God and for a serious spiritual life, criticizes his own attitudes and tepidity, prays to God for strength

“Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things, come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful” (Mark 4:18-19). These words are in the first place applicable to me. On the one hand, there was this enthusiasm for art to which I sacrificed some time ago, and largely even today, all my religious life. Whereas the latter should be the fundamental thread in our life like food, and the rest should take its rightful place. But I am too much in love with this world, not even considering that we are *advenae et peregrini*³⁰⁰ and I read excessively. From tomorrow on, I will try to help the lads carry their cross; I will go to the brigade more often.

God, God, help me for having deserted you. Give me again the strength to see you everywhere and in everything, to feel you everywhere, and not to be afraid (because we are *advenae* (newcomers)!)



Ivan (second on the left) in front of the military headquarters on the battlefield in Dolomites

Zingarella, 25 April 1917 – (20 years and 4 months)

Compares Goncharov with Russian and French writers

Goncharov is a great narrator, but lacks form. Everything is broad, large. *La vie toute entière, toute détaillée.*³⁰¹ With this detailed picture of life he reminds me strongly of Zola in whom, along with the main action, the background is presented in the same detail as the main idea. Admittedly, Zola exaggerates so that one is at pains to catch the main idea, but the whole life is portrayed as if on a photograph.

In a similar way, Goncharov gives us all the long letters, all secondary images and talk, unlike Turgenev who presents everything which does not concern the main idea in a few words. Formally clumsy are also Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, whereas among the

³⁰⁰ Latin.: newcomers and travelers

³⁰¹ French: Life in its fullness, with all the details.

Russians Turgenev is the only real artist. Concise forms, where, as in Flaubert, not a word or simile is superfluous, because everything bends, like in architecture, towards one point.

Zingarella, 26 April 1917 – (20 years and 4 months)

The development of material and spiritual culture on the basis of Mysterium crucis

When a man finds himself in mortal danger, then he observes the entire nature from one viewpoint only: does a certain part of it increase or decrease this danger. Only when it is overcome, is it possible to observe this magnificence of nature and develop in a cultural way.

This thought is the psychological foundation for the understanding of culture. While people lived in caves and fought for their survival, they couldn't in those moments of perennial danger philosophically and objectively understand nature and life. Spiritual culture could not have developed at that time, unlike the times when the needs of life were easily met.

A nation must be independent materially, if it wants to develop culturally. I include the *mysterium crucis*³⁰² which is the source of life and progress in this thesis. It doesn't have to be necessarily the *crux materialis*, but also *spiritualis*³⁰³ (Holy Lady!). (...)

(Here follows the final review of Goncharov's The Precipice and a final evaluation of his characters and their personalities)

Zingarella, 4 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Plan for a novella Defectors about the causes and backgrounds of wars and dilemmas about the justification of revolution

I have a plan to write a novelette in the manner of Maupassant's *La mère sauvage*. The fundamental idea is this: peoples engaged in a battle, fighting heroically, have no real patriotic feeling. They clearly feel that the Italians and other nations are no real enemies, but that the enemies are those who created this war. Why should they suffer for the sake of others; to suffer hunger for so many years and sacrifice their lives in most severe clashes? When they return home, these people will again be serfs from whom the so-called state will draw blood. Two of them will realize that and defect. It is after them that the work will bear the title *Defectors*.

I hold that this novelette will characterize this entire century where really there are no national tensions – except on the east between the Serbs and Germans due to *Drang nach Osten* (drive towards the east) – but only class differences. This war is a fabrication, the only real tension today being the one between the fed and the hungry. Today revolution is historically justified – I still do not dare talk about ethical justification, so the action of those two defectors is a revolutionary expression of their sane mind³⁰⁴

Zingarella, 5 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the novel Mother by Maxim Gorky

This is no work of art. Tendentiousness and his social-democratic convictions blind the narrator and make him lose objectivity in portraying the characters. The protagonists, socialists, are all good people in every way, in whatever circumstances they may be, while

³⁰² Latin.: mystery of the cross

³⁰³ Latin: material and spiritual cross

³⁰⁴ Merz never managed to write this novelette. But from this brief sketch we can clearly conclude on the social and political situation which Merz encountered on the battlefield and on the circumstances in which he lived. Namely, in the Austrian army there were a lot of cases, particularly of Croatian soldiers, who deserted the army and defected to the Italians, something that Merz mentions on several places in his Diary. In one situation, he even contemplated doing the same himself, being aware of the nonsense of that war.

the representatives of the ruling class are slaves, fools, people out of touch with life and others. There is no higher point of observation here. Along with all that the psychology of the so-called main character, the Mother, is banal and weak. From the beginning to the end almost the same words are being repeated: she felt... The mother felt.

Her psyche is not rendered as it really is, but he projects what was going on in her soul. According to him, all psychology is flaccid; her whole enthusiasm is pale.

However, the writer's views are plainly visible. These protagonists who fight for the progress of mankind, for the betterment of the state of the workers speak eternally and enthusiastically. It sounds so weird where so many people praise themselves and speak with such enthusiasm, and none of them has a deeper inner life. All their ideology consists in the words "fight for truth" which allows the mother to agree. These revolutionaries are of different types, especially Paul who, apart from a strong will, possesses no deeper thoughts.

From the cultural historical point of view the work is interesting because it reflects the better part of the strivings of social democracy. Who knows them in real life will see that, along with these noble persons, the majority of the workers shout: *panem et circenses*³⁰⁵. It is the workers who swear the most, go to the public houses and into cabarets. After work – entertainment; as if this life was forever. Maxim Gorky in *Mother* never mentioned a speck of dirt on the souls of these people.

Yes, we said that the work is interesting because we live in a century which fights against those who possess excessive property.

The literary expression of this social-democratic epoch is this work. Admittedly, this epoch is not treated deeply; because only the material struggle is presented. The workers and peasants are physically enslaved and therefore they organize themselves to topple this regime and thus arrive at a material wealth. Not a word is said about the spiritual rising, about the spiritual revolution. Those few words about the faith, the disbelief of these fighters for truth, are not elaborated in the least; actually, the religion of the mother herself is a religion of some sensitivity which consists of feelings only. What a strange thing for a mother's Christianity to transform itself to another religion – religion of love for mankind! Terrible psychological leaps, a huge misunderstanding of Christianity! As if Christianity didn't care for those who suffer! (...)

The late Krek³⁰⁶ loved this work.³⁰⁷

(Here follows a brief description of the novel *Mother* by Maxim Gorky)

Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

At the end of this ninth Diary notebook Merz noted seven sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. It seems that they are not a constituent part of the Diary, but he copied them from somewhere, probably for his personal use. After that, at the end of the notebook an address is written, as is the case with all other notebooks; he did it in case they got lost, or if he is killed, to inform the finder of the author and whom they should be sent to. On one such wartime notebook he wrote the address in several languages (See the beginning of the 13th notebook of the Diary, 27 January 1918).

³⁰⁵ Latin: Bread and games.

³⁰⁶ Dr. Janez Ev. KREK (1865–1917), Slovenian priest, professor of theology, sociologist, writer and publicist. Known for his promotion of the Christian social movements and organizing Christian social courses. His ideas and activities had a great influence on Croatian Catholics too, especially the younger ones organized in the Croatian Catholic Movement.

³⁰⁷ This is the end of the 9th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering a period from 31 March until 5 May 1917.

1. Jesus, who was sentenced for my sake.
2. Jesus, who was scourged for my sake.
3. Jesus, who was crowned with thorns for my sake.
4. Jesus, who was humiliated for my sake.
5. Jesus who was offered bile and vinegar.
6. Jesus, who was crucified on the cross like a criminal for my sake.
7. Jesus, who suffered insults in his last suffering for my sake.

*Kadett – aspirant Merz Hans, c. phil, Banja Luka, Bosnien, Kolodvor*³⁰⁸

Zingarella, 7 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)³⁰⁹

Gathers experience in behaving towards subordinates, dilemma between gentleness and strictness

What a strange world! I did a lot of good for my lads, and not even a cleaner obeys me. How strange and incomprehensible! I will be more rigorous, maybe that will help. Up until now I held that everything goes through goodness and I was deadly wrong. They obey like lambs those who beat and despise them, as a matter of fact, they respect them.

Zingarella, 9 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Critique of Maxim Gorky's ideology and comparison with German romantics

I read *Doge und Dogesse* by R.T.A. Hoffmann. It is evident that German romantics are the masters of the novella. They look upon life simple-mindedly and so their works are permeated with this naive tone. (...) Romantic poetry attracts me enormously, especially as a change after the naturalist works of Gorky. Everything thrives and bubbles, all nature lives and speaks, whereas in Gorky we find only the black problems of life, wandering in the darkness and not finding what one is looking for. This life without God, ideals tied to the present moment, progress, revolution, it is all so dark and deceitful. The misery of the workers is misery and pain, there is no doubt about that, but this is not absolute misery, only a phase which confirms the great optimistic thought about the *mysterium crucis* (mystery of the cross) and the other life. Gorky is combatting misery as if it were some absolute evil, and the successes of his revolution are in his eyes absolute good; the actions of the mother and her joy is in his eyes the Kingdom of God. My God, what a dark Kingdom of God when everything ends with death! Why struggle for ethical thoughts when death is stronger?

Zingarella, 18 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Tries to overcome the fear of death, notices the transience of life and feels the need for self-perfecting

Our cannons were roaring nastily. The whole barracks shake when the 15 cm cannon thunders. One gets used to everything. Whether the cannons roar or not, I go my own way. As if it was nothing. The thoughts that we are newcomers do not appear that often. Up to a point I regret that I didn't go through this war more directly. Pain, suffering, looking upon thousands of dismembered dead and exhausted people surely washes away everything temporary and suggests the meaning of life with huge energy. The little pain that I suffered, the jump to avoid cannon grenades and shrapnel (on the way to the brigade),

³⁰⁸ Cadet trainee Merz Hans, student of the Philosophical Faculty, Banja Luka, Bosnia, Railway Station

³⁰⁹ This is the beginning of the 10th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 7 May until 22 July 1917.

always spoke to me the Lord's words: "Why do you fear? Don't you have faith?" Indeed, why fear? The One up there knows already what will happen to me. He loves me immeasurably and knows whether it is better for me to die or go on living. Why fear when He determines my path in life? We ought to live and praise Him eternally and not worry about mortal danger.

What is life after all? The other day one soldier was lying down near the cemetery. He was lying like a log. As if he never lived at all. What is then the purpose of life? To enjoy it, succumb to passion? Strange purpose when with death it is all gone.

Why do I have such a striving towards perfecting of myself, for getting near to the greatest One, why does some supernatural power always tell me to fast, not to eat too much, to be a superhuman?



War zone in the Dolomites (Photo: I. Merz)

Zingarella, 19 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

Situation on the frontline, the cannons are firing

They say that tonight there will be massive firing at the Italians, to fool them so they switch their army here. Last night on the right flank the Italians captured some hill; a far cannon fire could be heard the whole night: it thunders as if there was a bowling alley there somewhere, and the dull irregular sound of balls rolling is heard.

The review of the Solovyov's work Spiritual Foundations of Life and reflections on Christ and Antichrist

Three conversations, discussion in dramatic form in which people of different persuasions meet and discuss eternal questions. The same form was used by Moravsky in his *Discussions* on the Geneva Lake. The most interesting is the end – the story about the Antichrist. With it the writer wants to prove the real existence of evil and good and the absolute predominance of good.

The idea of the Antichrist in key strokes is like in Benson: the egoism of the century which finds personification in that man and as its culmination the hatred and envy towards the Galilean in whom it believes, but does not want to kneel and bow down to him. Just like Christ is a point from which rays the ideas that emanate from the Godhead, so is Antichrist his opponent, i.e. the product of an epoch of whom he is the culmination: antigod-devil-man.

God-man-Christ 
 devil-man-Antichrist

This treaty with the devil is some kind of dogma in anti-Christology. Solovyov arranged historical events around it. One great central state was created under pressure from the Mongols, and it is headed by Antichrist.

The spiritual color of that world is similar to present-day world: humanism, brotherhood, social welfare. This is what this “man of the future” gives; as a matter of fact, he takes care of entertainment too. *Panem et circenses* (bread and games) is the motto of his state. He performs “miracles”, as is foretold in the Gospel. This miracle-worker is some Catholic ex-bishop who knows eastern mystical lore, as well as the results of contemporary scientific findings. In the eyes of the world he is a miracle-worker.

I don’t like the end. Solovyov is too tolerant of the Protestants. The age of Antichrist comes slowly, in stages. All the positive religions will be exposed to attacks, and they will unite under the pressure of these circumstances before his coming. The Protestants, studying the sources – as Solovyov presumes – must come to the conclusion about the Holy Eucharist by themselves. The age of increased desperation, resignation and summarizing of all spiritual suffering prompts people to think that God is not only outside of us, up in the Heavens, but that since Christ’s coming he lives among us always. Otherwise, Christ wouldn’t fulfil his mission if he merely came and went; with his advent and incarnation he regenerated the entire universe, all the visible nature and from that day this transformation of nature is repeating itself eternally.

Death is only an illusory phase of life, and we attach too much importance to it. We are only weak Christians. In order for us to be always aware of this transformation of nature, this real existence of the good in nature and in us, he left Himself here so we can receive him as often as we want, if possible daily, so we can always live in the mystical realization that this life is factually and not only theoretically, the Kingdom of God. (It is easy to say so; but sin is strong, and I myself fall short of this ideal). Learned Protestants must have arrived at that too. The thought that Rome plays the role of a strong cosmopolitan organization, the East the role of mystical traditionalism, and Protestants the role of a critical, reasonable religiousness is feasible. Only this influence and the regenerative power of the Russians and Germans should have manifested earlier and created a small but strong Roman Church. This is not the product of the environment and two men, Ivan and Ernst Pauli, but a consequence of long strivings.

Zingarella, 25 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

“This sacrament bestows the grace of the Holy Spirit, returns chastity to a fallen soul and enlivens its primeval beauty which sin had taken away from it”

(The Imitation of Christ, IV. Book, Chapter 1, line 38)

Zingarella, 26 May 1917 – (20 years and 5 months)

“This grace sometimes spreads like the ocean; and the believer, suffused with love feels that his soul, and even his weak body, is filled with unknown power” *(The Imitation of Christ, IV. Book, Chapter 1, line 39)*

(Here follows a brief quotation in German from Solovyov’s work Sonntags und Osterbriefe 16.)

Zingarella, 4 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Church, the pinnacle and central point of the culture and entire mankind

I was looking from Monte Kuk upon the Roan. In the valley, a town with a church can be seen. Church, my God, the pinnacle and central point of culture and entire mankind. How I marvel at mankind which builds towns and unites human work with the idea of God; like an image of Christ.

My heart is pulling me down there; I miss people and work, the color of various languages and arts; the color, colorfulness, diversity. I miss cultural institutions, various societies, the different orders active among mankind. Let the center of everything be our Lord Jesus, who consecrated all the nature and all the activity of mankind within the Church, his living body.

And as the town down there stands empty, the Church, the symbol of religion, is a memento to the generations. From above the shells are showering, and transient soldiers gloomily gaze in that direction. Everyone is against the war and no one has the power to resist and establish a normal state in nature – harmony.

Zingarella, 6 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Casualties, mines, shells, airplanes

They carry the wounded more often now. The worst of all are the mines; they explode and wound terribly. Airplanes are a true power: bullets are flying around our heads. Along with that, the Italians shoot at the road with heavy weapons.

Zingarella, Tuesday, 12 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Cannon, grenades, firing, explosions...

On Saturday night, I led two companies of the 14th regiment to Malga Cima. The lads, tired from the journey, hardly settled down when the order came to proceed to Monte Forno. I returned before dawn, but after one hour, in my sleep, I heard the shooting and the whistle of cannon grenades. The Italians started to fire; grenades were exploding beside our barracks. With my lads, I sneaked up to the Regiment Headquarters and there the explosion of the anti-aircraft cannon which shook the earth could be clearly discernible. Terrible noise, whistling, booms. All the possible tones which the devil was producing, balancing in his arrogance as if on a rubber string.

Mortal danger, surrendering to God's will, the consequences of deserting Christ

Our lads are not really fatalists, they surrender to God's will because they say they will live as long as He has written in his book, in other words, as long as He desires. This is how I feel too, and I am not afraid. I only pray for my sins to be forgiven. This terrible noise, the explosion of grenades, mines, then the silence, the chatter of rifle fire, in the air the sounds of airplanes, the dead and the wounded; this is all living history.

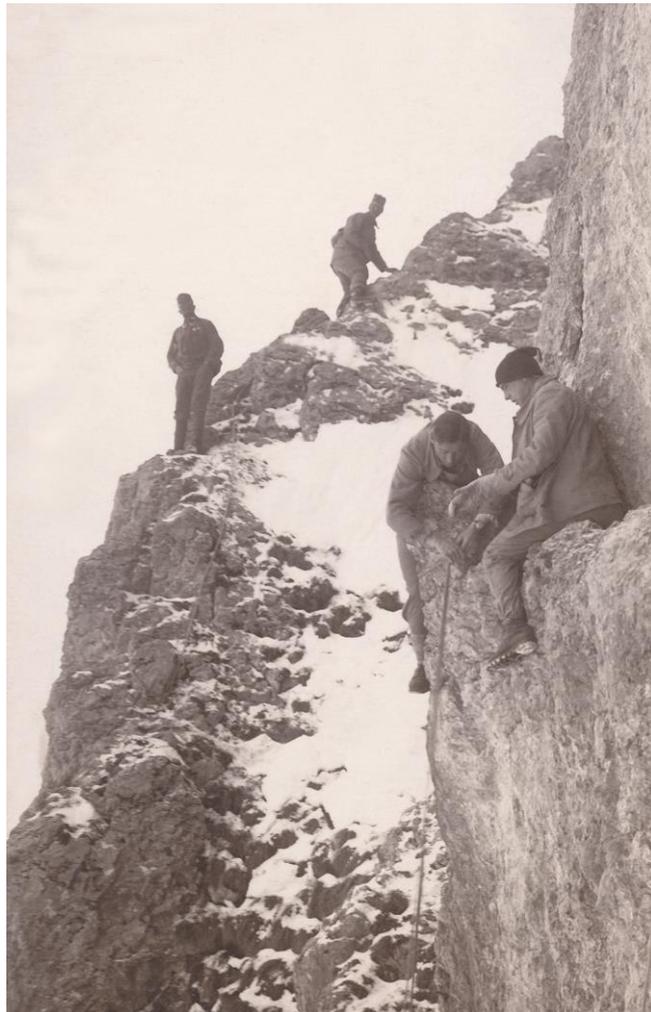
Above all of this there hovers the white and magnificent image of Christ: "I brought the sword." Only now do I understand the full meaning of these words; if you will not follow me, if you will only think of yourselves, you will break loose from my Body and there will be discord, war in all its terrible phases. "I bring the sword", these words echo in my mind. The medicine to all this: *Revenons à l'Eglise! – Let's get back to the Church!*

The day before yesterday, as I was returning from the inspection of the guard into the Regiment Headquarters, I dashed into the barracks and found Dervišević. He was speaking in a stretched voice: "I don't fear, brother, in the least. Let it hit me. On Soča I prayed to God which I rarely do; one cannot suffer and carry military food when there is more mud on it, than food. I feel sorry for the young ones like you. Hey, good luck, trust God and fear not!"

*A review of Scheffel's³¹⁰ work *The Trumpeter from Säckingen**

It belongs to that category of epics which appeared in the time of Romanticism. Chiefly, the background is popular history and folk customs. Their technique also leans upon popular traditions. Therefore, it is understandable how many similarities it has with Pan Tadeusz, with Homer, Tennyson, Pushkin and others. Folk elements are the most interesting here: whereas Werner's love for Margareta is the thread which keeps the entire work as one whole. The work possesses a freshness which proceeds from humor. It is this trait which differentiates it from all other epics of this kind. The historical background: the action takes place in the 17th century after the Thirty Years' War, at the time of Turkish onslaughts. The main protagonists are Catholics, and their entanglements are being resolved by the Pope himself in Rome. (...)

(Here follows a lengthy presentation of the content, literary analysis of the work and its characters.)



View of the Italian battlefield where Ivan was engaged in 1917

³¹⁰ It is interesting to note, as is seen here and in other entries in his war Diary, that Merz has such a composure of mind to find the time, in spite of the situation on the battlefield, to read and analyze the literary works. It is obvious that he is inwardly completely at peace, surrendered into God's will with respect to mortal danger and the future so he continues with the work that interests him whenever circumstances allow.

Zingarella, 17 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Interested chiefly in the philosophy of life and ethical issues after the enthusiasm for esthetics and literature waned

Youthful enthusiasm is gradually fading away. I am falling more and more on the level of an ordinary, weak man. There was a time when I thought I would learn several languages, and now even my French has deteriorated. Generally, it is as if all these esthetic and literary thoughts ceased to exist; other, ethical issues have come to the surface. My chief interest now is the philosophy of life³¹¹; I read Solovyov (*The Spiritual Foundations of Life!*), the Gospel, Pellic, and I want to penetrate into the mystery of life. But, my God, how am I going to penetrate into it when my will is too weak and I constantly sin, especially in eating.

Life is really sickening; I eat every piece of bread with fear because my conscience tells me “enough!”, but I eat it nevertheless and consciously break off from the body of Christ.

The question of the relationship of animals to God; Christ saves the entire universe

Talking with Fial – an atheist – a question arose in my mind about the relationship of animals toward God and why is it so that one animal kills another. We factually feel sympathy when we kill some beast, because it is suffering in the process. And we are forced by nature to take the life of these beings, if we wish to preserve our own. It is like this in all the nature. I understand the *mysterium crucis* in man, but what have the animals done to suffer?

Reflecting upon this, a thought is occurring to me that before the creation of man, in nature there was some free will which broke away from God and therefore suffers. Or maybe Adam, breaking away from God, brought misfortune upon all of nature. Christ – the second Adam – saving man, saves the entire universe. Admittedly, I see nothing of it.

Zingarella, 18 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Fire and explosions obscured the sun

There was a great fire and it obscured the sun. The cannon thunder on Monte Zebio, the window is quivering. A bright day became dark. Through the Strassenperze valley a mist is gathering slowly, covering all. 7 o'clock, due to shooting and rain...

Zingarella, 20 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Dramatic description of the battle, the earth shakes, terrible noise

From an elevated position – above the Regiment Headquarters, I watched the cannon fire on Monte Zebio. The earth shook, along the road spurts of smoke shot into the air, white, black, red. Constantly, these spurts of smoke were jutting into the air. Then a grenade came whistling and fell behind the lines, rousing a black cloud. Terrible noise: in different nuances. The glass on my window is shattered.

The airplanes came like a navy, dignified, ordered like squares on a chess board. They separated just above us and dropped white bombs. One of them fell a hundred feet from us, shook the earth and raised an enormous cloud of black smoke. – *C'est la vie; c'est l'histoire*. (This is life, this is history)

³¹¹ Underlined by Ivan Merz.

Zingarella, 22 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Encounter with death, a motivation and call to ascetic life

I looked at a dozen corpses, men that died in these last battles. They lie covered, but the bodies are clearly recognizable: some without a leg, some without a head. One leg was sticking out with skin wrinkled like parchment. There, that is life. I don't want to be sentimental, because that would mean weakness, but what I am looking at is stark reality which shouts: "Don't give up! Triumph over death!" Christ is hovering above it all: "Who will believe in me, will not know death." Asceticism, observation of life and work only in that direction, without any concessions to "this" earth is the only real gesture in life. And who is living like that today? Even here people live instinctively, like in the background. When shooting starts, they hide in a grotto, and when it's over, they quarrel between themselves – who feared the most, who stayed in the grotto the longest, etc. I am no better. How much we all differ from real Christians!

Yearning for the Eucharist

I would like to receive the Lord who loves me more than anyone else and who is dearest to my heart in this whole world. The only question is - am I worthy of him, and I fear I am too weak to sacrifice myself to the Most Holy Host without ulterior thoughts. Rightly says Kempis, we are prepared to enjoy the Host, but when we ought to bear the cross with gladness, we despair.

Review and analysis of Shakespeare's work Henry IV

The good old Shakespeare. What an elevated opinion about man he has! What kind of people are Coriolanus, Hamlet, Henry IV? Only, each of them has his mistakes and perishes due to them. Yes, tragedy is the necessary consequence of guilt. In this disentanglement of guilt consists almost the entire plot of all of Shakespeare's works.

Henry IV kills Richard II out of vainglory. For this he has to pay a price: "It is a difficult burden for the skin upon which a crown presses down" (II/III/1); finally, due to this he dies. This tragic guilt drags on through all the royal dramas and in a hereditary manner punishes the carriers of the crown. (...)

(Here follows a brief summary and critique of this work and its characters)

Zingarella, 26 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Description of the battlefield, visit by the Emperor Karl von Habsburg

Yesterday around 4 p.m. I went from here to Campo Verde. From above, the Italian battle lines were visible, as well as the white smoke of grenades which exploded around them. In the Division Headquarters, I took the silver medals, to take them to Blaitle, 3rd Corps, because the Emperor³¹² is coming there and will honor the lads in person. Everything was swarming around the Division; cars, horses, carriages, cannon munition, wounded Italians still in helmets (from Porto Lepozze). Torn and bloody. Some are rascals, other beautiful, cultured men, with well shaven black beards. *Mysterium crucis*...

From the elevation point at 1949 m, a beautiful view opens down into the valley 800 m below us; spruce and beech forest, grass, flowers and all kinds of leaves. One shudders with delight at seeing such beauty after a long time. We descended into the Asse valley and then to Blaitle. We came back at 10 a.m. over Ghartel (the entire town) and the elevation of 981m, through the Galinar's "House".

³¹² The Emperor Karl von Habsburg, The last Emperor of Austria-Hungary and the legal Croatian king. Pope John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed in 2004, just like Ivan Merz one year earlier! When the Emperor Francis Joseph died in 1916 and the young Emperor Karl ascended to the throne, he undertook all in his might to end the war and establish peace.



Karl von Habsburg, the last Austro-Hungarian Emperor and Croatian King, visited the battlefield in Tyrol in 1917. Ivan sent the postcard with his picture to his father from the battlefield on 12 May 1917

Zingarella, 27 June 1917 – (20 years and 6 months)

Disagreements with mother due to reading of books

“Don’t read such books as Jörgensen’s *Pilgerbuch*, this is completely abnormal stuff.” This is what mother writes me, so how can I look forward to coming home for leave! Happiness doesn’t consist in good food and clean clothes only, not even in paternal love. I want them to understand me, and not judge blindly. It is strange that war had no effect on her, and in front of her eyes there is still the image of a nicely dressed “proper” boy.

*Review and analysis of the work *Lettres de Mon Moulin* by A. Daudet*

(...) In these stories, which Daudet writes in the solitude of a Provencal milieu, the subject-matter is the introduction of the steam mill and its consequences, the pastoral and small-town love, a priest who narrates his dreams from the pulpit and thus wins the attention of people, legends, castles and hunting, Africa and Paris. All the stories are permeated with freshness and this string of small pictures portray a large part of the Provence, Paris, the sea, Algiers, legends and morale of the people. One could call this work a gallery of miniature pictures from an ordinary life of the French.

*The end of the review of Shakespeare’s work *Henry IV**

Hein lives in friendship with Falstaff and is approachable to everybody, but when he takes on the crown, he renounces Falstaff and becomes a traditional king. The leap is too great, although there have been such cases in history. Shakespeare was interested in the ordinary life of the people, and he looked upon it without judging its moral consistency, although we conclude that he was above it.

He illustrates the present situation of the Croatian people with Kranjčević’s verses:

If the cock would only sing,
As everyone believes:
At that very moment everyone would resurrect,
Even those who didn’t even die!
But the lazy cock keeps silent

Dozing at the dunghill:
While the giants and heroes
All return to their graves.

(S. S. Kranjčević, The Uskok Elegies, 2, the sit-together)

Leave me in my solitude;
Only God knows
What my heart feels
At the moment when there is no hope!

(S. S. Kranjčević, The Uskok Elegies, 9, royal palace in Baška)

This is the foundation of the entire of Kranjčević's philosophy. Because really, looking at our people as they lose morale day by day, he ought to have become a patriotic pessimist.

Nobody knew him and where he came from,
They didn't know where the secret stranger went.
He came out of nowhere and into nowhere he vanished,
Like a meteor, that lights up for a moment the dark night.
They looked after his bright trace, speaking under their breath:
This is Christ who came from the cross, this was he who was with us!

(S. S. Kranjčević, Resurrectio)

The leaders of the French revolution never even considered that the idea of "brotherhood, equality and freedom" is actually Christ's idea. People had only a dark intuition of it, but He was the first to say it apocalyptically.

Let a string make a sound
Like a whole people that cries

(S. S. Kranjčević, The Uskok Elegies, 8. The Trsat shadow)

Let us dig a grave for us, a great one
From one end of the homeland to another;
And let us lie in it silently
Embraced like brothers.
So we shall sleep together
You king Dmitar Zvonimir.

(S. S. Kranjčević, The Uskok Elegies, 9. royal palace in Baška)

Zingarella, 5 July 1917 – (20 years and 7 months)

Great writers in their works interpret the world and the relation between God and nature

Only those books are great and eternal that can be read always. A man who really lives, searches for those great minds which understand the idea of the world and life and interpret it in their works. That's why Kempis is so deep. Because he interprets every moment of life, knows every striving within himself. Solovyov is just like that. He is surely among the first who brought into harmony that cruel question of *God and nature*, and he interprets the meaning of this relationship. Reading this I feel as if liberated, because the enmity between the soul and the creatures was not clear to me, but it comes out into the open in ascetic philosophers. This enmity is directed only at evil within ourselves and in nature, but not at that harmony and beauty which they do not resist. Only the eastern ascetics can resist because they hold that God is outside of the world and that this whole nature has no positive meaning. For us, western Christians this world is like a small homeland, because God is in it and acts in it; only we are still not completely aware

of it. But, as with time the Kingdom of God will rise in our hearts, we will be more and more aware that it must manifest in nature as well, that the entire nature must be regenerated and transformed.



*The area in the Dolomites where Ivan was engaged during World War I.
In the middle, a soldier with a mountain horse (Photo: I. Merz)*

The artists in their works present the truth about life

For the same reason, I love Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev. They perceive the world in a special way and indirectly interpret it. For this reason, every art is educational; because the artist, presenting his theme and looking at it interprets it in his way. Or, when I think of the many representations of Christ, nearly in every picture the Christian world view is expressed. In *Mona Lisa*, however, we feel that vague element in a woman which factually exists in her soul, but we are not aware of it. For Leonardo da Vinci, it was a fact. And the *Ninth Symphony* (Beethoven) claims that the universal harmony is deeper than the battle, but it cannot be reached except through a battle.

Tolstoy's *Kreutzer's Sonata* looks in its own way into the soul of the modern society and comes to the conclusion that it is rotten and that it departed from its goal. Reading it, we are glad, because not everyone has been given the privilege to objectively realize the truth in life.

Review and analysis of Kuprin's work Duel and comparison with other writers

Like Tolstoy, Kuprin wanted to illuminate with the fire of truth one aspect of Russian life – the officers' class. The realistic description of these people and their actions is admittedly very lively and palpable and this rendering of a topic with historic, naturalistic objectivity has an educational impact. Absolute objectivity is not possible in the arts; Zola and all the French naturalists can claim that their works are “a fragment cut out from life” or a “photography” of life (Maupassant), but we must be in the clear that this “fragment” or photograph is only a photographic negative in their soul. (...) Looking at a work of art in a usual way, we do not experience pleasure due to the educational tone only, but we enjoy it for the sake of art itself. This is some *l'art pour l'artism* which really exists because Keats's thought *A little beauty is a joy forever* is an axiom of the soul.

Let's get back to Kuprin! Like other Russian realists he is able to vividly portray the society. I repeat, only the society – people. He is not interested as Balzac and Turgenev are, in the entire realistic milieu; for him it is only secondary; he looks at it with the eyes

of an ordinary man, without interest and love. The naturalistic technique serves him to picture the animal, instinctive officer life. (...)

(Here follows an extensive presentation of Kuprin's work, contents, analysis and judgement of the characters and a critical valorization of the negativity and behavior in the life of Russian officers.)

Zingarella, 6 July 1917 – (20 years and 7 months)

Review and analysis of the work Novel by Kielland

Zingarella, 19 July 1917 – (20 years and 7 months)

Bulwer's novel The Last Days of Pompeii

The historical novel which, like *Quo vadis*, takes place during early Christianity. In a nice and picturesque way, the life of Romans-Pompeians is shown during the time of the blossoming of their culture. The intrigue is completely romantic, and, like in *Quo vadis*, embedded in that milieu. It is clearly visible that this is a romantic novel on the way of becoming realistic. (...)

(Here follows a review, brief content, analysis and comment of the work and its characters.)

Zingarella, 22 July 1917 – (20 years and 7 months)³¹³

“And unless you exert force upon yourself, you will not win over your shortcomings” (*The Imitation of Christ, Book I, Chapter 22, v. 26*)

Feldpost 369, Bh 2, Stab, Fhnr. near Asiago,
25 August 1917 – (20 years and 8 months)

Merz's thoughts on the call for peace issued by the Pope Benedict XV

During August of 1917 Merz made no entries into his Diary. From his correspondence with the parents we realize that he had to change his location often. Usually this was in the vicinity of the town of Asiago. It is from here that he sent to his father a very interesting letter – a comment of the current political situation. Namely, Pope Benedict XV sent to all the warring states and their governments on 14 August 1917 an appeal to end the war and conclude peace. In his appeal, he gave the basic guidelines of how to arrive at that peace. In his letter to his father of 25 August 1917 Merz comments on this papal appeal. The reader might be a little bit surprised at this comment, but we ought to bear in mind that Merz was only 21 at the time of its writing, and didn't have the attitude towards the Pope and papacy as he will have upon the completion of his studies and his spiritual-intellectual formation. However, what he said in his comment is objectively true, and we can only marvel at a youth of that age and his mature and broad thoughts about the social and political situation which engulfed Europe during World War I.

Dear dad! The Pope's appeal for peace will surely fail, because he lacks authority over the nations. At one time, it was completely different, when the Pope was distributing royal crowns, established rulers and made alliances between states. At that time, naturally, he could have established peace because the nations, due to their common religion, trusted him. The behavior of the present Pope is along the lines of tradition because he is above

³¹³ This is the end of the 10th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 7 May until 22 July 1917.

the nations and wishes to achieve the honorable rights of every nation; but his words must fall on unfruitful ground because now every state is pursuing its own interest and doesn't want to hear a word about common cultural strivings. Today all the states are so demoralized that only power can bring peace, and not great thoughts. Just now we see the necessity that the Pope, in order to be operational on a world level must, unconditionally, have access to the sea and the free state³¹⁴, otherwise the just interests of entire nations will be decimated by overly nationalistic Italian censorship. Today there are only two possibilities to achieve peace: by force, i.e. that one side will be forced to accept peace because in the current moral conditions prevalent among the states only the expansionist-nationalist interests matter. The other option is peace proposals based on ideas or an international peace conference; but this is utopia. (The Stockholm Conference!) I am fine. Ivan.

Monte Rasta, 9 September 1917 – (20 years and 9 months)³¹⁵

Demolished town of Asiago

Circumstances got worse. We ought to go on patrol more often. Otherwise, the view of Asiago is beautiful, but also sad because most of the houses are damaged or destroyed. It is sad to look at a dead town; where once the train was whistling, horses were running with carriages, and the bells of two churches rang *Hail Mary* in the evening, now the only thing that can be heard is the rushing of cars, the banging of pickaxes, the yelling of corporals. I am not afraid to go on patrol, but why expose my life due to the whims of some captain. At my home, mother is crying because the mail didn't come for one week, and what would she feel if she knew my real position here?

Self-criticism concerning his relationship towards superior officers

My superiors cannot stand me. I addressed one colonel as "General, Sir" and stuttered in saying so. Along with that I got a reprimand because during a "march" I watched without reaction the excesses of the drunken Medić and others like him. Captain Jasbec hates me because I speak too much. He is right in this, because I wasn't humble and shouldn't have justified myself. In the future, I will strive to be humble and not defend myself if someone criticizes me without reason.

Regrets that there is no Mass, asks himself where are the military chaplains, prays to God

There is no Eucharist. I live here like a pagan or some beast. As if Agnus³¹⁶ is not any more in the center of the universe, as if He doesn't exist anymore. Oh God, the giver of solace, come and permeate my nature with atoms of eternity so I can understand the

³¹⁴ At that time, Pope was still "A Vatican prisoner". In 1870 when the papal state was occupied by force and abolished by Garibaldi and his troops and the movement for the unification of Italy, the Pope retired within the walls of the Vatican and never ventured outside. He cancelled even the appearances on the ledges of the Basilica. This was a protest against the injustice inflicted upon the Holy See and papacy as early as 1870. Only in 1929 during the reign of the Pope Pius XI the Holy See and Italy were reconciled and a normal state established which lasts to this day. On 11th February 1929, the Lateran Agreements were signed which regulate the relations between the Holy See and the state of Italy according to which the current state of the Vatican— *Stato della Citta di Vaticano* has been established as a subject in international law. The same agreements resolved the numerous property problems which dated from 1870 and the forceful occupation of Rome when the property of the Church was confiscated, a matter which burdened the relations between the Vatican and Italy for full 60 years. In the preparation and conclusion of the Lateran Agreements a positive role was played by the then Prime Minister of the Italian Government Benito Mussolini – During Merz's lifetime this issue was still not resolved and we can find in his writings frequent references of what was then called *questione romana* (The Roman question) and the desire for its solution as soon as possible. This was achieved, however, only a year after his death.

³¹⁵ Here begins the 11th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 9 September until 5 October 1917.

³¹⁶ Latin: Lamb (Christ)

course of life similarly to Yourself. The modern state takes care that we have rum, and the Holy Eucharist is a side matter! Where are the military chaplains? Why do they desert their flock precisely when it needs them most?!

“My son, let it not be hard for you if someone thinks evil of you or says something you would rather not hear. You should think of yourself even worse and not consider anyone worse than you.” (*The Imitation of Christ, Book III, Chapter 28, v. 1-2*)

Monte Rasta, 17 September 1917 – (20 years and 9 months)

“My soul is sometimes sad to the point of tears; sometimes restless due to passions which threaten her.” (*The Imitation of Christ, Book III, Chapter 50, v. 5*)

Inner void, dissatisfaction, absence of the Holy Spirit, loss of the connection with the Original Source

Jørgensen says that a poet in those moments takes his pen and throws it away, and the painter tears his painting apart. These are the horrible moments when one doesn't see why we live, why all this effort. What is the purpose of art, profession, everything one likes so much? Are the studies worth the trouble, likewise the reading of literature, or is there something more valuable than it all?

The moments when one loses touch with the universe are terrible indeed, moments when one's work is like a traveler lost in the desert without a notion of the connection of his suffering with the striving of all of society. Terrible indeed are the moments when the Holy Spirit withdraws somewhere and darkness reigns in the soul. These are the moments over which Faust and modern society despairs because they have lost touch with the Original Source. It goes without saying that philosophy, law, medicine and theology cannot be a purpose unto themselves and do not lead to the truth. And this instinctive life (Faust!) is likewise unsuccessful, hard. That is why Faust at the end gets closer to the Truth doing good deeds as a practical man.

Discussion with Goethe and the destiny of his Faust; observes Goethe's shortcomings

They criticize Goethe because Faust chose a practical profession not finding pleasure in art. Psychologically this is equally untenable. Goethe didn't arrive at the notion of the Godhead, he was a kind of pantheist. As such he couldn't have been satisfied with science, because it lacks a logical connection with the pantheistic Deity. In other words: what is the last “Why” with respect to science? A pantheist is unable to answer that. To imitate nature, see through it or understand it?! But this is still not the last “Why” because, as Faust himself proves, this cannot be a purpose unto itself. The same is with art. Can art be a purpose unto itself? Isn't a consequential painter going to throw away his brush asking why he paints, maybe to give the blood of his inner life, why should he represent all that? He cannot do it for the sake of pleasure only, because ultimately this pleasure flees from him.

Faust logically couldn't become an artist, although his nature is artistic because Goethe did not arrive at knowing God. In these circumstances, Faust found satisfaction in practical work, in good deeds. This leads us to God, but it is instinctive, like the feelings of a mother who, although she doesn't believe or is even evil, nevertheless loves her children. Likewise, noble people, irrespective of their world views. Absolute pleasure lies only in God, and if Goethe had developed further and arrived at the knowledge of God, then Faust could have been happy with art after all. It is only then that it would gain its real value; only then would Faust understand why philosophy, law, art: *ad maximam Dei gloriam*³¹⁷! If Faust had become a Benedictine monk where sacral art is cultivated, or if he had become a religious artist or a lover of arts living in the world because it is an

³¹⁷ Latin: To the greatest glory of God.

antechamber to the heavens where everything is extraordinarily beautiful, then Faust part III would represent the true solution which would satisfy us even on the literary level.

Monte Rasta, 17 September 1917 – (20 years and 9 months)

Review and critique of the novel Polaniecki Family by Henrik Sienkiewicz

Sienkiewicz's mission in life was to contribute something to the Polish state. This work shows that the basis of the state is the family. The first part is not what the poet really thought. I didn't read the second part because I know that he will elaborate on family happiness in all its phases: children, birth, customs, illness and others. Conversations about love are too commonplace, boring. The whole evolution of love, although very real, is presented too photographically. There is no artistic concision which eliminates everything but the most characteristic. In addition to that, the key protagonist is too colorless; at least his exterior is not as impressive as hers. The reason for this is that the key protagonist is the poet's self-portrait.

Along with all its extensiveness and focus on daily life, the work contains feelings and some very beautiful features. It doesn't have a particular artistic value and doesn't resolve any of the major issues of life. It is an ordinary love novel which makes pleasant reading, but when you close the book, you forget about it. The second part is surely more interesting because it elaborates the family itself. In addition, as I believe, the character of Plawicky will develop and he will become a practical Christian. I hold that this problem will be executed rather poorly because Sienkiewicz is more an esthetic Christian than a real one. Also in the novel *Quo vadis* there are Christian effects which are real, but we have no hint of any battle which is essential for every convert. (...) When I read the second part, I will focus on some characters.

(Here follows a short description of the contents of the novel)



Ivan (first to the left) in the barracks of the military headquarters on the Italian battlefield in the Dolomites in 1917

Review and critique of three Molière's comedies

The old man Molière! How strongly he presents human vices. Naturally, he leads them to the point of absurdity. The very spirit of the epoch was absurd - romantic: the age of knights, beautiful coquettes, misers and other human curiosities. But, the value of the work lies in the portrayal of human passions, in characters which are eternal. Technically, the execution is not the best. He is too much attached to old traditions. The case of Deus

ex machina still plays too great a role. It is a satire on physicians who are loaded with unintelligible phrases and kill people – without responsibility, of course. (...)

Review and analysis of Molière's comedies Le médecin malgré lui, Le Sicilien ou l'Amour peintre and Le Mariage forcé (...)

In Molière the characters are always the same. These works are still under the influence of classical comedy, but a strong spirit is already being felt which observes and presents the weaknesses of his time. His works are satire without any maliciousness. He laid the foundations of modern French drama which also presents contemporary social circumstances, but without the romantic attire. Technically, the works are unique.

Monte Rasta, 20 September 1917 – (20 years and 9 months)

Night alert in the camp

On 18 September in the morning Italian artillery started firing. We were in the cavern for four hours. Several of the barracks were destroyed. This night there were shouts: “Alert, Italians! They are already here!” It was a general mess, and in my imagination, I already saw them swarming over the bulwark. They will come any moment. I fled outside, and the lads were lined up and waiting. I asked what it was all about and the guard told me “A lamp lit up, some of the men lied down, and the others rushed forward.” I looked, fired the rockets for illumination. The patrol returned from the field and told us there was nothing. They say that one of these days we are going to Soča!

Monte Rasta, 26 September 1917 – (20 years and 9 months)

Plane crash in the middle of the town, death and pain

A little while ago I was observing one of our airplanes go down. First there was smoke, then a yellow fire, and then it rushed down vertically leaving a white trace behind it. It fell in the middle of Asiago, near the smaller church and the smoke was going up long after the crash. Some said they saw men in the air “as if a tarboosh hat was falling”. Soon after that dust was raised on two masked roads leading to Asiago. The cars rushed into the town. These were two strong images, two small excerpts from the world war. A burning airplane and a man “falling like a tarboosh hat”. Death and pain!

Monte Rasta, 5 October 1917 – (20 years and 10 months)

Sad memory of the first love after Greta's death³¹⁸

Dear Greta! It's a rainy day. I sit in my darkened room and am overcome by sadness. I took the pencil and tried to write Your name, which I haven't written for years. Greta Teschner! God, how much content lies in this name! How many memories tear the heart apart upon hearing the melody of these words! Your blond hair and Your face, so full of life and health appears again in front of my soul.

We didn't know what love was. This word never passed across our lips. But when I abstrusely found out that You were gravely ill, I spent the night in prayer. I prayed to God for your life, but the next day I found out you were already dead. Dead! Let the tears flow into eternity, let my soul wail, let the eyes burn –little Greta is dead. She lies motionless on the bed. My fiancée. Then they took her to the cemetery. When, after a period of time, I came there too, I saw the sorrowful and terrible words written on the cross: Greta Teschner. You hover above the worlds and my eyes still ache from a multitude of tears. All my inner being is lifted up to meet with You. The harmony of my soul wishes to merge with Yours. You are not here anymore, and my old age is approaching. My life too

³¹⁸ This entry, dedicated to the memory of Greta, Merz wrote in German. This is the only text about Greta in Merz's Diary written in German.

will pass and disappear. New generations will come and go, and no trace will be left of our love, as if it never existed. And so, I linger on. I am propelled by desires, undermined by battles and instability.

When shall we see the resurrected Lamb and the splendor of his eternally beautiful Mother?

When will the time finally come when there will be no revulsion, no night and no sin? When will the time come filled by eternal glory, eternal brilliance? When shall we see the resurrected Lamb and the splendor of his eternally beautiful Mother, which stretches above all the worlds? When, o when shall we be united with the singing of heavenly choirs, when shall we be absorbed in the eternal *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*, enveloped by divine light?

Fasting and Communion – means for subduing the law of the body which works against the law of the spirit

When will the time come when we shall not need to eat, neither fight for even the smallest good deed. O Adam, you didn't think what you were doing. In our bodies, there is a law completely different from the one in our soul. All nature is corrupt, everything is evil and our soul lapses into darkness. When shall we be aware of ourselves, when will our soul understand itself, when shall we truly feel our alliance with God? Abstinence and Eucharist are the paths that lead there. Fasting and Communion, two opposites. Fasting means pain and renunciation of pleasure; whereas, Communion gives us immeasurable pleasure and transforms our body into the divine one.

Thoughts before the offensive, possibility of being killed, desire for life in a monastery

Strange are the paths of men. Who knows whether I will remain alive? We will go to Carinthia, and there the offensive will begin. God is commander of the destiny of nations; he knows what is best for me. I will be satisfied with everything and will receive with thankfulness everything he decides to give me. If it will bring sorrow upon my parents, even this pain will pass. After all, this "valley of tears" is not our homeland! I think how happy the people in the monastery are. They can always devote themselves to prayer and good deeds, having surrendered their free will and doing as others order them to. *Abnegatio sui ipsius*³¹⁹ and the merging of the soul with everything, so that it forgets itself.

Just don't force me to kill people, you people without a soul!³²⁰

Homec, 27 October 1917 – (20 years and 10 months)³²¹

Passing through captured areas

On 24 October, we were in Smojar and on the 25th we were passing over Krn. Moonlight was shining on snow-covered mountains. The Italians left Krn in a rush, leaving behind them warehouses full of food, clothes, shoes; in the safes, there was photographic equipment and other valuable things. We spent the night under the blankets. The next day we went out. On our way, we found cannon, machine guns, champagne, chicken, coffee, all of which are a rarity among us. Along the way from Krn into the valley everywhere we found things which the Italians left as they fled. On the way to Drežnice, and then on to Karfreit there was an entire fleet of deserted cars, bicycles, rifles,

³¹⁹ Latin: Renunciation of oneself.

³²⁰ Here ends the 11th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering the period from 9 September until 5 October 1917.

³²¹ This is the beginning of the 12th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering the period from 27 October until 25 December 1917.

command archives, telephones. Our lads ate the whole time, changed into new clothes, filled their backpacks with food. They sang. We put our backpacks on captured carriages, so we walked unburdened.

Tarcento, 30 October 1917 – (20 years and 10 months)

Condemns looting by the army in captured areas

The way on was hard. Rain was pouring down, and the bridges were destroyed, so we had to tread during the night through a quagmire. In those moments despair descends upon the soul. Soldiers stepped from one mishap into another. We spent the night in Pascolo.

We were surprised at finding rice. Yesterday we stayed in Molmento. This is a nice little town. Lots of food and other things. More than we have in peacetime. All the inhabitants fled, and our army looted without mercy. They burst into houses, turned over the closets and searched all around. The officers loitered in pharmacies in search of alcohol. It was terrible to see white underwear thrown all over, black trousers, sewing machines. I thought of my parents; what a disaster it would be if they had to flee from their home and leave behind all those little things that became dear at the mercy of soldiers who, at the moment of victory think only of themselves like animals. Terrible pictures!

5 November 1917 – (20 years and 11 months)

Description of the battle on Tagliamento

On 3 November at night there was a battle on Tagliamento. On the eastern side of the river our command had dinner under the moonlight. Rifle fire could be heard, the growling of machine guns, explosions of hand grenades. At one point the order came, and we had to cross the bridge under the moonlight. We stopped on the island and were met by shrapnel which peppered us along with loud explosions and flashes. A lot of men were wounded. We lied down beside the bulwark but couldn't sleep because those cannons from the left side were too precise. The fourth captured the other part of the bridge. We hurried after them.³²²



Military action on the Italian battlefield.

³²² Merz noted the events of 27 October, 30 October and 5 November 1917 on papers which he lost, as he notes on 13 November. However, later he found them and we placed them chronologically before that date.

Feldre, 13 November 1917 – (20 years and 11 months)

Description of the movement on the battlefield, condemns looting of a deserted town

I lost my notes and must write the most important things all over again. On 25 October at night by the moonlight we passed over Krn which was covered with snow. A splendid landscape. Deserted trenches full of food: bread, tins, wine. In the officers' canteen, we found champagne and other valuable things. We spent the night on Krn and descended into Karfreit. The inhabitants were drunk with happiness, an old lady teacher sang. The Germans were bursting into a house and behaved like barbarians. Over Komec, Bergogna, Pascolo, Molmento, we arrived in Torcento. Our army looted the deserted town without mercy. The officers loitered in pharmacies. Enormously rich land. Cheese, coffee, oil, rice in abundance.

Santa Maria 18 November 1917 – (20 years and 11 months)

Description of a dramatic battle on Cornella and savage behavior of soldiers

The day before yesterday the battle was on at Cornella. I was watching from an elevation of 1093 m as our artillery shelled the mountain. Italian cannon returned fire, destroying one battery. It was then that Captain Huber was killed. The world thinks of medals, the honor of the regiment and other stupidities. Italians that wanted to surrender were all killed. I don't know any more what patriotism and honor are. I despise killing and torturing and now, looking at all this, all abstract notions fade away. I love mankind, the small, unknown people who carry on their backs the entire burden of history. A nation without religion belongs in zoology. Not thinking about death, it loots and eats. When pressed down by pain, it is dispirited and threatens God.

Suffering, blood, death contribute to his spiritual transformation and bring him closer to God

I also lost touch with Him. Tagliamento was a period of spiritual renewal. Looking at the dead Kunc, a Herzegovinian who was killed during an onslaught, and the wounded Italians who moan: “*O, mia mamma*” while blood drains from their wounds, I became all the better seeing that life is nothing, that the whole meaning lies in spirituality. Thoughts from the monastery, striving towards monastic life where one lives with God who is unchangeable and real... Glory, medals, “patriotism”, these are all nonsense. Humbleness, self-denial, silence and good deeds are the only reality now and after death.

Virgo Maria adiuva nos!³²³

Rocca, 17 December 1917 – (21 years) 4 p.m.

Situation on the frontline and in the background, regiment at rest, he learns Italian

Two 30 cm cannons have been firing the whole afternoon, on Monte Grappa, as they say. The whole village is shaking, and when fire bursts from the barrel, the sight is terrible. The offensive on Italy was due to begin last night, but snow prevented it. They say it will start tonight. Our regiment has been on leave for almost a month. We were in Villa Pajera in Carara alle Stalle, Rasain, Artena, Cana, Pedavena, Foncaso. I spent my nights on the hay, in cold rooms and learnt Italian as much as I could. The thought of peace – there is truce with Russia – is holding us up. The prisoners are not any more as cheerful and carefree as they were at the beginning. The inhabitants in these western regions are much prouder than those around Toppo where they greeted us with wine and apples shouting: “*a Roma*”.³²⁴

³²³ Virgin Mary, help us!

³²⁴ To Rome!

Rocca, 18 December 1917 – (21 years)

Description of the offensive, prisoners, casualties, killed by their own artillery

Greta's birthday!

The night was silent. Around six in the morning, a 30-cm cannon boomed and the firing started. Everything was echoing. I went to Cismone to put up the postal relay. One small Italian grenade fell some 80 feet from us. It was on the bridge where Cismone flows into the Brenta. Cismone is completely destroyed. The valleys were echoing, and high up in the air more than a thousand dogs were barking; 30-cm cannons were firing from afar. The prisoners came, some 800 of them; thin men, soiled with yellow mud, very depressed. Our wounded soldiers were in the same state; they dragged on behind the prisoners. They say that we penetrated the frontline, but lost a lot of men; mostly due to our own artillery!

Incin, 25 December 1917 – (21 years)

A pagan Christmas away from home

This was the first Christmas which I spent away from home. The nature had that mood so characteristic of Christmas Eve. The sky was covered with mist which, illuminated by the moon, reflected that light on the mountains partially covered by snow. On the hill opposite me, on the other side of the Cismona, the camp fires were burning.

I greeted Christmas, this holiday of the children, in a pagan way. I didn't even catch the opportunity to repent for my sins and start a stronger spiritual life. There was meat for dinner, so I ate... which means even the food was not in harmony with great Christianity which on that day is one even in the bodily sense.³²⁵

*Difficult situation on the frontlines in the mountains,
thankful for the prayers which helped him escape danger*

And how are the people up there on Monte Tossolone surviving?! The road up there is peppered day and night with shells. It is steep and slippery. To spend the nights without roof, suffer hunger and be under constant fire. They tell me they haven't seen anything like that yet. I stayed down in the valley; I myself don't know how it happened. It could be due to favoritism! Or maybe the prayers of my parents, friends? I am sorry that I do not suffer together with the rest, but enjoy my time here. I will not venture to go up there on my own, because I have nothing to do there.³²⁶

³²⁵ At that time on Christmas Eve, including dinner, a strict fasting and abstinence from meat was the rule.

³²⁶ Here ends the 12th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary covering the period from 27 October until 25 December 1917.



Military action on the Italian battlefield.

St. Gregorio, 27 January 1918 – (21 years and 1 month)³²⁷

Inscription at the beginning of the 13th Diary notebook

Owner: (Besitzer, possessore): Merz Ivo, Kolodvor Banja Luka (Bosnien, Bosnia)

Falls es verloren geht bitte hinzusenden.

Se si perdesse questo quaderno si prega di mandarlo a l'indirizzo scritto la sù.

S'il se perdait ce cahier, ayez la bonté de l'envoyer à l'adresse marquée de haut.

In case this notebook is lost, please send it to the above address.

St. Gregorio, 27 January 1918 – (21 years and 1 month)

Criticizes himself and starts to live an ascetic life

Life is hard; I strive for abstinence, but it isn't easy. I am trying to skip breakfast and eating in the afternoon. For several days, I have been sleeping on the ground and I will try to get up earlier than usual (at least around 6 a.m.), so I can spend more time with God. I speak too much. I am too much in the company of others. I am weak in suffering. When our regiment goes up to take our position, I will volunteer to go with them to get used to the arrival of death.

Help me, Lord!³²⁸

Fonzaso, 2 February 1918 – (21 years and 2 months)

Enjoys beautiful singing of Italian girls and comments on the contents of the songs

This is the third time that I am in this town among cheerful girls. They sing about love, about the knights, about their fiancés who are in the war, about death and topics common to all folk songs and these melodies along with all their southern color are full of melancholy, sadness. These girls live only for love and laughter. They love music and play; love is stronger than anything else, including parental feelings. There is something chivalrous in it; they are prepared to flee, cheat their parents only to please their sweethearts.

³²⁷ This is the beginning of the 13th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering the period from 27 January until 24 September 1918.

³²⁸ From this entry, it is visible how Merz during his stay on the battlefield begins a serious ascetic life, although he still feels his human weakness. He will formulate his decisions and put them into the Diary in a still clearer form in a couple of days, on 5 February 1918.

And they really sing nicely: sopranos and altos are always in harmony. They sing for the first time together; in my home country, even after long schooling, girls couldn't sing as precisely. I wrote down two of the songs. The first is similar in content to our operetta texts, but their melody oozes with joy and melancholy which are so characteristically blended in Italian art. (...) The other song is real Romance one; a chivalry motif in the background, characteristic of Spanish folk songs. (...)

(Here follow the texts of both songs in the Italian language)

Fonzaso, 5 February 1918 – (21 years and 2 months)

The first serious program for the spiritual life according to the principles of newly recognized Catholicism which he intends to implement after the war

A decree has been proclaimed according to which I could get a three-month leave for the continuation of my studies. This I fear. I fear hunger and I believe that I won't be able to dedicate myself fully to the studies. I will strive to humbly fulfill God's will, not to be too eager for knowledge and to work as much as I can. Science must not be an end in itself, it must, along with all the beauty hidden in it, contribute to the Kingdom of God on earth. I, therefore, think that, along with all the love for one's profession every person must live socially, live in the world and support those who suffer. Because science is a product of suffering: technology wants to ease man's material grievances, and art observes the painstaking life of the people and draws conceptual consequences. Life is everything...

As a student, I intend to work in the Society of St. Vincent – international religious background – and in “Croatia”³²⁹ (national-religious background). I ought to strive to eat only twice a day, in such a way I am materially free. As a matter of principle one shouldn't eat at other times, even if offered.

I shouldn't forget to restrain the body. Hard bunk, get up early, occasionally apply a rigorous fast so that at every moment I can do with my body according to my will.

The cultivation of health and bodily beauty is also important. Priests, nuns and other good people who neglect their appearance and exhibit an un-aesthetic mark, etc. make a horrible impression. The new generation must be healthy, cheerful and beautiful. What is ugly is the consequence of sin. Therefore, man must control himself and hold the cultivation of health and beauty as a means to conquer oneself and strengthen the will.

One should never forget God! One should unceasingly strive to be united to him. Every day – best at dawn – should be used for contemplation, prayer, if at all possible in the vicinity of the Eucharist or during holy Mass. This hour must be the source of the day, in that hour one must forget the entire world, lose all the worries of the world, all the nervousness of life, be still as in a cradle. In that hour, the plans should be created for the coming day, here one contemplates one's mistakes and prays for grace to overcome all weakness.

It would be terrible if this war didn't have any spiritual benefits for me! I mustn't live the way I lived before the war. I must begin a new, regenerated life in the spirit of newly recognized Catholicism. May our only Lord help me, because a man can do naught by oneself!

³²⁹ “Croatia” – Society of Croatian Catholic students in Vienna, established in 1903

Tomasso, dne 5. veljače 1918.

Živao je proglaš, po kojemu bih mogao dobiti tromjesečni dopust za nastavak studija. Šal me je traja. Bojim se glada i drzim da se neću moći posvećiti studiju - gledajući da ponizno vidim Božju volju, da ne budem ovisno poklepan za znanjem i ne radim toliko, koliko mogu. Nauka ne smije da bude sama sebi ciljom, ona mora da usa u Egiptu, koje ona samo po sebi krije i da midonese mesto Kragjstom Pržjini na zemlji. Mislim zato da usa u ljubav k svojoj stenci, mora aveti čovjek svojatno da živi, da živi uživstu i u spomane one, koji tupe - jer nauka je protukat koprnje: tehnika hoće da olakša čovjeku materijalne nesgode, a umjetnost promatra mukotrupni život ljudi i poslači idigne konvencionalije. Život je ore ...

Mislim da kao dak radim u kas dmitru dr. Vinka - internacionalna religiozna opozadina - i u Hrvatskoj (nacionalna - religiozna opozadina). Nastojati onda vaje, da se uo 2 puta verno žitem, tako sam materijalno

Facsimile of the diary entry of 5 February 1918 in which Ivan lays out his religious-moral program of life compiled on the basis of the war experience which he went through. He actually implemented these decisions for a more perfect Christian life after

Casara Bolzano, 14 February 1918 – (21 years and 2 months)

Company, brandy, wine, smoke, this is not for me. My God, just now that allegedly Yugoslavs stage a celebration, the Slovenians, Serbians, Bosnian Muslims are stitching together their future roof.

God, help me to gain mastery over myself.



*On the Italian battlefield in the Dolomites. Up in the snow soldiers on the frontline
(Photo: I. Merz)*

Casara Bolzano, 20 February 1918 – (21 years and 2 months)

Fights against gluttony

It is disgusting to look at a voracious man, one that would eat the whole day if he could! I must be on guard regarding gluttony, because this is my great weakness. It should be enough to eat once a day! I will try, on the first available occasion. I remember a Trappist monk who ate very little. This was on Christmas 1916; Nina was celebrating his First Mass. Being a volunteer, and having come home from Seewiesen on a three-day leave, I was invited to the table! I had good appetite and ate a lot. The old Trappist monk took only a little bit of everything. I was wondering. I didn't understand him. But now I do!

Only the one who works has the right to eat. The type of work is secondary! I read *Arbeiter Zeitung*. There is a lot of truth in it. The class which is suffering thinks most realistically.

The position is desperate. Germans are like Machiavelli; if a nation persists in its arrogance, it will perish.

Banja Luka, 4 March 1918 – (21 years and 3 months)

*A very interesting review, comment and critique of the work Lazarine by Paul Bourget,
from a religious perspective*

Bourget's way of writing consists in the elaboration of one philosophical idea. This idea in most of his works is the same – conversion. In his works, he leads his protagonists into various phases of life and at the end concludes that a man must become a Catholic, if he draws all the logical consequences from life. It is as if Bourget has taken this task upon himself! In the process, however, his works become monotonous. Bourget has lived

through this process of conversion once and his first work is surely the most elementary. One would expect the other works to be even more Catholic, ethical, where many things will be taken for granted. Admittedly, there is nothing contrary to ethics, as a matter of fact in some places quotations from the Bible are very apt, but the religious life of Lazarine is too simple, conventional. When I think how brilliantly Bourget analyzed the psychology of a murder! How come then, that he never tried to analyze prayer?! If he is not deep enough to know everything that a prayer contains from his own experience – this mystical conversation with the Absolute Being – at least he should have studied a bit more the mystical writers in order to reconstruct the spiritual feelings of a soul so permeated with religion as Lazarine is.

The unraveling of the plot, the way in which the chief protagonist is converted is too unnatural, un-psychological. Graffetteau, the chief protagonist who has been through thick and thin in the war, never thought of life after death. Strange! One sees that Bourget has never been in war. To die for France is a very beautiful thought by itself; but this thought evaporates under the impact of the fear of death, as it is not real in the least. The hero who fights for his homeland either suppresses into the background all new thoughts which may occur and with an enormous willpower fights on saying to himself that he must not betray his intention³³⁰, while another who allows thoughts that occur in those moments unconditionally arrives at belief in God, in the afterlife and at belief in Christ. It is obvious that the work was written by an artist; but this artist knows better the psychology of sin than the psychology of Grace. (...) Bourget ascribes the conversion of Graffetteau to Grace which has come upon him due to the prayers of Lazarine. But, why didn't he attempt to analyze this action of grace? This is where the greatness of a new Catholic writer lies. Logically it is not difficult to prove: Lazarine is good and pious, her devoutness has real effects; therefore, it must be that devoutness is not only fiction, but a very real thing, etc.

For the moment, the historical milieu is very interesting. Along with many virtues, especially the portrayal of the background with all its sins, the work is lacking a description of the frontlines, life on the front, dying, corpses, blood, conversion. I hold that the poet himself must go through the pains which the people are going through, if he wants to remain modern. Yes, for this reason I hold that the work has the smell of peacetime age when people didn't feel what war really is; yes, war that disturbs everything and creates new people.

There is something else which I find odd. Do the French really think, as in 1870 that this is a battle for France, that the Germans are enemies, etc.? Isn't there even a bit of the social spirit among the people, the Christian spirit which ought to observe suffering mankind irrespective of nationality?! Maybe these thoughts occur in the background where the men draw all the ideology from life. The soldiers who bear all the difficulties surely think differently. (...)

Truly, it is heroism to expose oneself to danger and be killed, but not in this present-day war where the nations are fighting against their will. The bloody patriotism which knows only nations that have nothing in common has gone bankrupt today. One ought to consider that the front is not only defensive, where the hardships are endured, but also where your neighbor is being killed. It is as if this was felt by Bourget himself, and he doesn't portray Graffetteau dying during an onslaught, but when saving a wounded comrade. (...)

(Here follows a detailed account, comment and critique of the characters in the novel).

³³⁰ I.e. die for France

Banja Luka, 14 March 1918 – (21 years and 3 months)

Review and critique of Goethe's novel Kindred by Choice

A hugely extensive novel written in the manner of other similar works of the same century. A novel which reflects the relatively un-religious period, in which there were no newspapers (in present-day meaning), telegrams, trains. An idyllic life in a village, in a castle, reflections about oneself, that is all. Really, at that time people had a lot of time on their hands; because such a detailed description of the minutest events and passions is almost unthinkable today. We do not have the same perceptions nowadays. The work is outdated. (...)

Campo, 25 March 1918 – (21 years and 3 months)

Conception and sketch of a three-part novel that he would write on the basis of his war and religious experience

When I was sitting with my father in the *Korzo* coffee room in Zagreb, looking at the crowd, I thought: there, the cultured, modern man arranged a truly comfortable life for himself. He lives above the body and sensuality by simply having at his disposal in the simplest manner everything his body needs. His mind, liberated from worries about bodily and material affairs, is more clearly profiled and thereby the modern man becomes spiritually very refined. It suffices to think of Dorian Grey and many other esthetically refined modern men (Huysmans). In this life, the drive of the soul to free itself from slavery is true indeed...

There, these people sit in the coffee room. They read the papers, indulging their curiosity, killing an inborn boredom. (Everything apart from God creates boredom, and therefore, one removes it from one's life by artificial means: drink, newspapers, cinema, high street, novels.). When darkness comes, the lights are switched on; he has an itch in the throat, the waiter comes as if on wings and brings him coffee. If he is bored he gets up, sits in the tram and in a moment, he is at his home. The minutest need of the body is fulfilled so that his spirit can roam freely, unfettered by bodily needs. This is the image of the coffee room. The first part of a three-part novel.



Ivan with his father during leave from the army in 1918

Second part: let us assume that such a man, a young student or a judge or similar, who indulged in a coffee room life, goes to war. What a contrast! Before that he didn't even know he had a body, and now the rain is pouring and he goes up one hill, and soaking wet carries his back-pack. This pulls him to the ground, his shoulders ache, his legs shiver, and his feet are full of blisters.

The company marches on and he stops, sits on a rock, then gets up again to continue his way of the cross. And he hasn't eaten for a long time. Emptiness in the stomach squeezes him, and tired to the extreme he can barely move. He feels factually that he lives: he has a neck which is stiff, shoulders which burn, arms that are heavy, a back which aches, a stomach which squeezes, legs which barely move due to tiredness. And his skin is all wet: the water drips from under his uniform. And this man goes on, the man who used to get depressed at hearing a funeral orchestra; he now steps over disfigured corpses, looks at the heads, torsos, legs, dried blood and asks himself – why all this? Then the shooting starts, and he looks as the others beside him fall down, how they weep, moan, the blood flows, all is red. And he will follow in that fashion. When, where? What is life? Only death is real. What are our ideas, yearnings, plans, passions? Only death is the true thing. And he will lie there dead, yellow, motionless like a log. And the Earth will go on turning, and the sun will shine and people will live as if it never happened, as if he never lived at all. Then why live if everything remains unchanged? Is it all without meaning, merely chance...? No, it cannot be. Why should he then be afraid of that? Of death? He is not the only one. There are thousands who were killed, who are being killed now, but he doesn't care. Why then does he care if he is killed? Is he somebody apart from the rest? What then is the meaning of life? Surely it is not in this life...because with death everything stops. Does he have a Christian idea in his mind? Drawing the same conclusions, he arrives at Christianity. He survives war and returns home. End of part two.

So, what is the result that he reached? He cannot waste a part of his life in a coffee room. The picture of mankind suffering is always in front of his eyes, and he cannot live here comfortably knowing that so many people lack everything, that they have a body... so what is the correct way to live? In accordance with the idea from part one that spirituality requires independence from the body, the first part resolves this issue by giving him everything that the body needs. But this idea is not in harmony with suffering mankind in part two. There ought to be a compromise. Only asceticism can practically solve this contradiction. By asceticism a man becomes the *master* of temporality. He uses only the most necessary things, lives most humbly as if he were the greatest pauper. This is for the material life. For the spiritual one, there ought to be an evolution toward Christianity, the collision in the soul of this man should be brought to the point of absurdity: this man saw very well that asceticism leads to perfection, but he cannot do anything by himself. Desperation, where, how?

He is a representative of the entire human race which waits upon the Messiah. By reflecting, observing, looking at history he arrives at the center of everything: nature, the universe and life after death in concentric circles: The Host. The novel ends with the Revelation by John; I don't remember the exact words, but the meaning implied is that the Lamb (sacrifice) is the center of the universe.

Novels are the best mirrors of life. This is an introduction into an observation of the current war. This is the subject-matter for a novel; we should also weave in the problem of death and the spiritual atmosphere of the current age that would be drafted in main outline.

Contemporary post-war problems of life and their reflection in literature

This life finds reflection in literature. However, there is no mention of it among the Germans, and in Bosnia even less because the Yugoslavs are too much worried about their existence: they are still fighting. The French are spiritually the most agile. Bourget's *Lazarine* already touches upon these new problems, and the novel *The Meaning of Death* resolves them in a similar way. But, Bourget lapsed into a certain template. He produces works in which the end is conversion to Catholicism. His characteristic is to study the evolution of life which leads to Christianity. He seeks numerous variations by which a person reaches this point in life. In *Guilt* a physician converts, I think in order to repent for the guilt of his parents, and in *Lazarine* it is prayer which converts, and here the death of a young fighter converts...

Review, analysis and comment of the novel The Meaning of Death by Paul Bourget, comparison with Jørgensen

Bourget lays out the psychology of conversion in dialogues. The key persons speak and discuss after the event has happened and we find out about their evolution from their speech. But, these conversions do not make a deeply suggestive impression, precisely because they happen in dialogues. Images, more images! An artist should, even if it means going to the point of absurdity, picture the images of pain, images like in Dante, real, brutal images. There should be contrast between the two. (...) Jørgensen with his contrast is a hundred times more spontaneous. That scene in the silent chapel, far from the hurry of the world, its noise and passions, is spontaneous and suggestive. Bourget is too plain. His proofs are true, but lack the depth as in Jørgensen; the latter experienced conversion only once, whereas Bourget became Catholic already before the war so he knew what the fruit of these great events will be. He tried to imagine the evolution of others, without going through it himself once again. Therefore, this paleness! (...) A great work will be written by someone who really converted and who felt on his own skin all the horrors of this war. This is where we expect a great work to come from. This author will be the prophet of the new age and will give us the character of a new modern man, because modern literature still deals with this topic. (...)

(Here follows a detailed account of the content of the work and its characters)

Campo, Good Friday, 28 March 1918 – (21 years and 3 months)

Problems of military cohabitation

In this room, there is a machine which emits smoke the whole day so the entire room is in a kind of fog. Even the sunrays hardly penetrate this smoke. This smoke factory is called Musmin eff. Harambašić, a Muslim priest from Novi, here in the role of administrator.

Vienna, 8 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Reflections after the return from the theatre

I just came back from Burgtheater. Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* was on. As if I had lived in some pagan world and I was sorry for these people living without meaning and purpose, without religion; they construct some ideals for themselves, which have no real foundation. With death, everything vanishes. If that is so, why is it a "good deed" when someone commits suicide rather than being a slave? Why does free will have its value when everything ends with death?

Vienna, 9 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Review and critique of Ibsen's drama Hedda Gabler, analysis from the point of view of religious and moral criteria

(...) Hedda is a product of a modern milieu which is unable to say anything about the great ideas of the present century, about the idea of religion. She is the daughter of a general. This says a lot about her. Taking into account that she lived exclusively in a noble, comfortable environment, knowing of pain and death only from conversations, we admire her striving for strength and freedom. She needs a husband who would break her (she never says so) and not finding him, tries to break men with some demonic power (*battle of the sexes!*) Really, we ought to feel sorry for Hedda who, along with all her noble spirit lives so miserably and dies miserably. Objectively looking at her deeds and her life, everything is abominable. She is satiated and bored to death. She doesn't know the elementary pain to which the millions are exposed. She wants a servant, a horse and other things. She is not doing anything. However, the poet might answer like this: the distinctiveness of Hedda's character (it truly is distinctive) is that she hasn't found the right husband who would be stronger than her and direct her activities on the right way. She didn't find a companion for her life and took the wrong road marrying the one whom she doesn't love (and like Coriolanus, cannot go back). Due to that she must come to grief. The promised faithfulness is sacred for her and therefore she is heading for disaster. And what remains after her death? The idea of the given word. It sanctifies the deed. Because she could have saved herself.³³¹ (...) I think that Ibsen himself never thought of that. Suicide is by itself an evil, a fruit of a concealed and unknown sin. Here, it is a necessary evil because it proceeds from the ignorance of a fundamental law of life: the purpose of this life. (...) Hedda is a demonic woman who breaks others in her way, and finally she breaks herself. She killed Løugard and Mrs. Elosted and destroyed her child – Løugard's manuscript which was created under her influence. That original instinct of envy, the unconquered and great instinct is presented almost naturalistically. Seeing that her loved one created a great work with the help of another woman fills her with rage, and she throws the manuscript into the fire thus destroying the existence of two people. (...) Hedda is a specific literary character whom we meet often both in life and in literature. It is a rich and beautiful character whom the poet extracted from a historical range of personalities; she is corrupt in her primeval beauty by original sin (not knowing of God's

³³¹ In the drama Hedda ends her life with suicide.

revelation) and placed, so beautiful and terrible (due to sin), in her brutal reality on the pedestal of art. This is an artistic character and must never become a model for life; because the sin gives this beauty a special color, but this color bites, devastates, produces negativity. The beauty of her good features due to the sin in the background comes out more strongly into the forefront and increases the tragedy of Hedda's character to enormous heights. From the technical viewpoint, the work is classical. It corresponds to old Greek classical drama. (...)

(Here follows the review of the content of the work and a detailed analysis of its characters)

Critique of his own state of mind, need for a deeper spiritual life, admires the beauty of a Christian family

Life is everything... and I am threatened by the danger of entering again into the grey theoretical life of books. Tomorrow I will receive Holy Communion in order to get strength for the battle. I have been very lax these last days. I was half lazy, ate disorderly, prayed only a little, didn't suffer at all, had bursts of anger and I was stingy... for all these reasons I lost touch with That One.

There is nothing greater than a Christian family. The spirit that rules among the members, the sincerity, simplicity in self-sacrifice, it is all permeated with indescribable spirituality. I often think of Jović's family.³³²

Reflects seriously about his future and his calling in life, considers marrying

And what am I going to be? This is a difficult question which has been troubling me for a long time. I am interested in literature and art, although I do not enjoy them as much as I used to. I lost the youthful enthusiasm for something... because we are only transient beings in this world... a moment later we are not here any longer, and this life has meaning only if it is a preparation for the other one (it is so with the life of nations and mankind, too). If I graduate in philosophy and become a teacher, I am going to marry; because I hold that if someone chooses to remain single, let him take holy orders and be active in an absolutely mystical life. Those who didn't study, let him enter a monastery. I will strive for sanctity, for union with God our Lord and I will ask him to give me resilient strength in the battle of life and energy for creation.

It is easy to say so, but will I be able as a teacher with a wife and home to be active outside of my family? I fear not, because the position of a teacher is very dependent and material worries could break the most beautiful of dreams. And we do not need pale theoreticians, run-down teachers; there are too many such individuals around. We need healthy, practical people, and I see myself that in our country the teacher is the greatest theoretician, because he is too constrained by the absolutist system. Mother is right in fearing this profession. And what could I choose now, when so many years have passed and nothing interests me as much as art and literature do. I grew up in such a milieu where every new publication is eagerly awaited, where every magazine is being read, a newly printed artistic postcard bought, and it is hard for a man now to get rid of this illness and take up something completely new. It is true, literature is not all; literature, art in general, these are only details in that great work – the Kingdom of God. The ploughman and the shoe-maker and butcher and lawyer and guard, all of them are laborers in this great building. The question is not so much what your job is, but how do you fulfil it. All professions have equal value with God; you only have to work according to His will. And still, I would love so much to study literature and art! But, if sacrifice is necessary in order to bring my mother to conversion, I will take it. This is much more important than all the sciences of the world – because it is a terrible thought that she, whom I love so much,

³³² The Jović family – a numerous Croatian Catholic family in Banja Luka whom Ivan knew and with whose children he made friends in Banja Luka. Two sons from this family, Matija and Dragan, became Jesuits.

would be separated from Him suffering eternal torment (what a terrible thought!) – so why wouldn't I suppress myself, take up my cross and contribute this sacrifice for my mother. It is easy to be theoretical about Christianity and be enthusiastic about God when He doesn't ask anything of us; to be a practicing Catholic ought to be my purpose.

My God, enlighten me to come to a firm decision soon. Let Your will be done everywhere, because we are only provisional beings here, and in my real homeland no one will ask if I was a teacher or a bricklayer. But one should be something!

Vienna, 11 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Condemnation of the sin of lewdness of which he was an indirect witness

Tonight, I was a witness of one terrible thing. I was already in my bed when a man in the adjacent room brought with him a prostitute. (...) My blood was terribly agitated – I was curious (sin!!!) and I must admit that I am far from being *mortificatus*³³³. But, this excitement was cut short when from their conversation, I felt the terrible position in which the prostitute found herself when she said that she must live off something. (...) I felt that spiritual emptiness present in that room, something alien to life, a separation, a blackness, a colorlessness. I cannot describe this completely new feeling for me, but I find it easiest to say that I felt a horror where a gigantic human tragedy is happening in reality, in real life (not on the stage), destroying the existence of the spiritual man, a tragedy which throws him with titanic force from an immense height of human dignity into mindlessness – where a new concept is created that has nothing to do with man. I would have been the happiest if I could have called the girl to me, to help her in some way. Somebody told me that here a great sense of nature is being played out, that that is love, a great principle of life or similar! This is spiritual poverty, emptiness, sin! An extramarital relation is in reality not at all similar to the marital one. In the first of the two, all spirituality is lacking, as the symptoms show and the latter proves. A man becomes only a beast.

Vienna, 17 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Yesterday I spoke with Dr. Korošec.³³⁴

(On the same day, 17 April, when Merz mentions in his Diary the meeting with Dr. Korošec, he wrote to his father about this meeting and added the following sentence in his letter: "I saw Dr. Korošec and something will happen." It is obvious that they talked about the future of Yugoslav countries after the break-up of Austria-Hungary, a project on which Dr. Korošec, a pronounced Slovenian politician of pro-Yugoslav leaning, was especially engaged)

Review and critique of the comedy As You Like It by W. Shakespeare

(...) The historical background is for us Croatians particularly interesting. The fame about our pirates came all the way to England and surely the travelers were telling many

³³³ Latin: mortified

³³⁴ Anton KOROŠEC (1872–1940), Slovenian Catholic priest, a high-ranking politician in the Slovenian People's Party. As its deputy, in 1917 he became the president of the Yugoslav club in the Parliament in Vienna. On 30 May 1917 Korošec with several of his colleagues issued a declaration inviting the unification of "all countries in the Monarchy inhabited by Slovenians, Croats and Serbs." In August 1918 when it became clear that Austria is losing the war, he again gathered around himself the politicians who established a National Council with the purpose of "uniting of the Yugoslav peoples into an independent state". On [29 October 1918](#) he became president of the National Council, and after unification with the Kingdom of Serbia on 1 December 1918, he became the vice-president of the first government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.. Between 1920 and 1940 he was a minister in most governments of monarchic Yugoslavia (traffic, police, foreign affairs, education) as well as the Prime Minister and the president of the Senate. By the end of his life he openly acted against the freemasonry and communism. He also organized an anti-communist organization *Straža v viharju*. He died in Belgrade in 1940.

stories about them. It is visible what the English of that time thought about Croats whom they called Illyrians. There is mention of ancient towns like Solin, Split. (...) The English held that the Littoral (*Primorje*) was further down, still unexplored. Along the coast there are the old towns whose historical monuments are known everywhere. They are a nation of great pirates, but these pirates are not only looters and murderers, but among them there are many who engage in piracy from other, higher motives. These people are deeply honest and go even into death easily. This is the historical background and it was appropriate for him to weave into it the ancient motif of changing of clothes. (...) The English folk motif is the most valuable. The intrigue is transplanted on Illyrian soil, but the characters are English persons of that time and the whole value of the play lies in their imaging. (...)

(Here he lists quotations from the comedy which illustrate a connection with Croatian territories, followed by a review of the content and analysis of characters)

Review of the work Prince by the Countess of Zapolska

This is a presentation of the moral life in the Russian imperial court where in a very skilled manner the circumstances of the court are exposed, the weak people who decide the fate of the people and the miserable state in which they find themselves. The old Emperor wanders around the house like a ghost. The prince does everything he is ordered to do. He doesn't have the power to extricate himself from the claws of his tutors. The Emperor's uncle, a militarist, despises diplomacy. The Prime Minister is a prototype of a diplomat who bases everything on cunning and lies and firmly believes in his tactics. (...) The works such as this one also have their justification. These are pictures from a life which have a moralizing effect. Compared to these works Ibsen is classical, just like Sophocles compared to Euripides or Goethe compared to Lessing.

Vienna, 18 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Made acquaintance with Fr. Božo Milanović and talks with him about asceticism

I talked with some members of the Danica (in the club)³³⁵. These are religious people. Yesterday I met Božo Milanović³³⁶. Mato Filipović³³⁷ and I talked with him about asceticism. I also saw Pavešić. Tonight I am going back to my regiment.

Close to Feltre Villago, 25 April 1918 – (21 years and 4 months)

Political situation in the warring states

I was nominated Security officer with the II Military district. It is hard to raise oneself above this world. But, reading Italian illustrated magazines the whole tragedy of this war becomes apparent. After all, the mentality of Europe is united. The states are

³³⁵ Danica – Slovenian Students' Society in Vienna

³³⁶ Božo MILANOVIĆ (1890–1980), Croatian Catholic priest and politician from Istria, prominent public religious and cultural figure of his time, engaged in the preservation of the Croatian language and people in Istria. During Italian fascist rule in Istria he was one of the rare figures who by their political activity promoted the rights of non-Italian population against the Italian assimilation. His most important role was as a representative of Istria on the Peace Conference in Paris in 1946 on which the destiny of Istria after the World War II was decided. The data collected by mons. Božo Milanović and other Croatian priests were among the key arguments on the basis of which Istria became part of Croatia within the then communist Yugoslavia. In November 1946, he moved from Trieste where he had lived until then, to Pazin and took over the position of director of the Seminary high school. He was also head of the High Theological School in Pazin, and author of several textbooks. He also wrote several historical books about the recent history of Istria. He was the head of the Istrian literary society of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pazin, received several state medals and an honorary title of prelate of His Holiness and an honorary doctorate of the Theological Faculty in Zagreb.

³³⁷ Mato FILIPOVIĆ, 1890.-1960., a Jesuit, at that time the student of philosophy in Vienna. Merz was later in close friendship with him. Their correspondence is preserved.

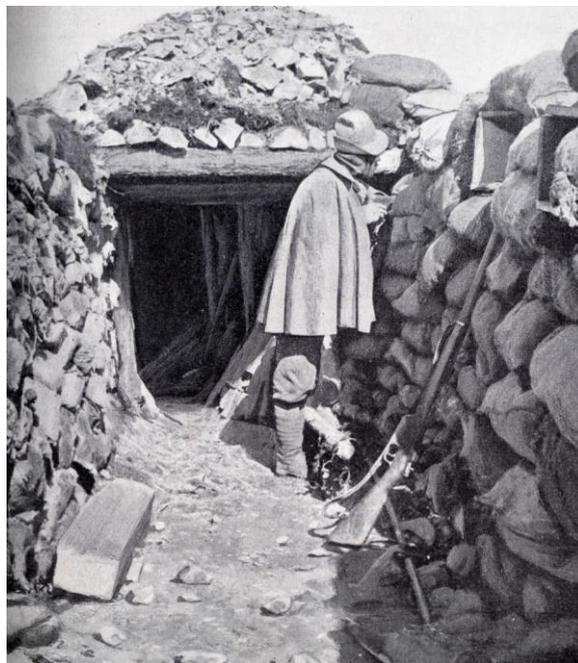
relatively well separated from one another, but when we look at Austrian, German or Italian papers we see that the virtues and mistakes are practically equal. They only wear different suits. The Italians write how they are advancing on all the fronts, how their military performs heroic acts, how it suffers. They always emphasize the weakness of the enemy; not a word about objective criticism. Just like here in Austria. (And these men of the same mentality are fighting.) In every Italian paper, there is some material about the royal family. Advertisement for the heir apparent? This is how it seems to me. There, the dynastic idea became a “sin”. Emanuele wants to secure a respectable position for his son. It is the same here.

Immorality on the battlefield

Italian women! I didn't see anything directly, but I sense, and by the talk of others I gather that they are not very choosy. When the Italians are here, it seems that “it” is customary. They are all the same... All our officers also speak about that and do not refrain to behave in that manner with wives, mothers. But these women are no better, although they are relatively beautiful, healthy and strong. I don't know what future this nation has. In Austria, the type of an honest, incorrupt girl is still preserved. We should strive by all means to keep this character inviolate.

Political reflections and forecasts about the future of nations after the war

In any case, we need the Yugoslav state³³⁸, but I hold that we should remain in alliance with other nations with whom we have historical ties. Habsburg is in the best position to formally hold together this union of nations, but every nation should have absolute equality, including the right to dethrone the ruler by vote, if he would pursue dynastic goals. Such a state should be a new type of the future Europe and the whole world. I hold that a complete separation from Austria is not correct, although I admit it is not pleasant to listen to orders from degenerate and immoral bureaucrats. The new government should be constituted by elections, and not nomination or rank.



Trench on the frontline where Ivan spent a certain period of time.

³³⁸ Merz, just like many Croats of his time, during World War I, was convinced in the usefulness of forming a Yugoslav state. At that time, there was no hint that the Serbs would try to use it in their favor. When unification was established, Merz was critical of the founding of the new state, and later, as a student in Paris, denounced the persecution of Croatian Catholics. A description of all these events is left in his Diary.

Monte Fontanel, 7 May 1918 – (21 years and 5 months)

Heartless killing of the enemy

The month of the Queen of May.

Up there the rain is pouring, and I am busy with tactical analysis as never before. Slavery... These are beautiful mountains, but furrowed everywhere. Here is one picture. We look through 15-fold binoculars at a group of eight Italians who are leisurely putting up the wire. The lieutenant, artillery commander, full of joy, immediately releases a salvo of grenades and kills one Italian. As it hit him, the lieutenant laughed with joy and wouldn't stop. He was happy that his artillery was precise. This is war, for someone it is a sport, for others making money, and for many, death!

Monte Fontanel, 10 May 1918 – (21 years and 5 months)

The Italians are shooting

On the way to the fifth company (Calcinohang) Italians are shooting at our lads as if they were rabbits. They flee down the slope, but the Italians keep shooting, like shooting at game, until they hit the target. Sport! They fire with different calibers into the Cinespa valley. Our observation point is destroyed.

Monte Fontanel, 16 May 1918 – (21 years and 5 months)

War operations, admits his spiritual weakness

There was a lot of shooting with mines. Fleger is on Spinucia. With what means we make war! Here is the Propaganda office and our task is to spread revolutionary ideas among the Italians and sow discord and mutual hatred among the Entente. (...)

I live sinfully. The will is weak. I am too much devoted to food.



Croatian soldiers on the Italian battlefield to whom Ivan was a superior officer (Photo: I. Merz)

Monte Fontanel, 20 May 1918 – (21 years and 5 months)

New positions on the battlefield, shooting, a wounded soldier, his physical and mental state

In front of the window the paramedics carried on a stretcher a cook covered in blood; his face was red, red, red – blood, blood, blood so that the facial features could not

be recognized. He is a cook with one company. The whole afternoon there was shooting with 15 cm grenades into the Cinespa valley and on Fontanel.

Mysterium vitae – a man covered in blood. From Adam until today millions have suffered the same and they will suffer until Judgement Day.

I was on Fontana Secca to see our new positions. It is beautiful up there. As if on a holiday. The wire comes all the way to the command. The view of the snow-covered Dolomites, Meleta, Pasubio is magnificent. One can see Seren and Campo and the road to the elevation 433. On the other side the view opens on Tomba, the Piave valley and the lowlands. On a clear day – so they say – one can see the sea, St. Mark's Church (Venice) and the steamboats.

Pentecost. I am ill. Stomach catarrh. Spiritually, I am down due to this illness.

Fontana Secca, 28 May 1918 – (21 years and 5 months)

Feels a spiritual malaise, tries to live ascetically even on the battlefield, prays

I am weak. I decided not to drink water – and I took it. I am falling from day to day. I am a weakling. I read *The Saint* by Fogazzaro. It interests me. I look upon the furrowed Grappa, Mt. Meate, Solarol and other mountains. On all sides, huge caverns gape. New ditches appear, new cannons are firing. The observers look through spyglasses. Everything is alive with work. Positions are being masked, food is brought up, material is carried around, soldiers dig and work day and night.

Thick wires are visible everywhere; this is electricity which powers machines and fills the trenches. On Grappa, there is some monument. The Italians invested enormous energies into these mountains. In these several months, they drilled them through; they did a magnificent work for the defense of their homeland.

They say that the offensive will start around 15 June. Our people are hungry.

God, help me! Give me the grace to become an unconditional master of my body! It is better to die than be a weakling, the game of passions.

May the Queen of May forgive me for thinking of Her so rarely!

God, God – more of the mystical world!



War zone in the Dolomites (Photo: I. Merz)

Fontana Secca, 1 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Preparations for the big offensive

It is interesting to observe through spyglasses the activity in the Italian mountains. On Mt. Meate, at the elevation of 1489 m, they dig and work unceasingly. On Pyramiden-Kuppe and Solarol I saw them dragging something through the trench, working and digging further. Their guards are always at the same place; a head with a helmet peeps small like a walnut. Enormous quantities of munition arrive. Our artillery shoots on different positions; preparation for the real thing. The day before yesterday I was looking at Venice. The sea could be seen and St. Mark's Church in the mist, also one bridge and boats which sail like black shadows.

Fontana Secca, 8 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Situation on the battlefield among the soldiers on the eve of the offensive

This morning again, like a fireball our airplane fell (in the direction of Giarone). The view from elevation 1611 is magnificent. Many hundred Italians are working on the road which leads by serpentines to Grappa. The caverns open up on all sides. Near the small church (Bassano) they gather in the morning and slowly go to work. On Schiavero they emerge slowly from their shelters and take shortcuts to different locations. One can see horses, cannon, the laying of mines. Yes, yes, in the defense of their homeland! Around 11 June – so they say – a big offensive will start from the regions of Frenzella, Cima, Ecker, Col del Rosso. The Austrians are armed to the teeth; it is impossible to count the 42 cm and 30.5 cm cannon in Val Frenzella. Numerous infantry divisions are ready for the strike.

They say that the Italians are in a terrible fear. They fear combat gases (of course they do!). They are expecting the offensive any day now, always at the ready.

In our quarters, everybody is trying to catch the rabbit in the forest. The captain wants gold and money, as well as linen and stockings for his wife; others lie in wait for cloth, and the hungry lads, suffering hunger for many days now, already see the Italian tins and bread flying into their mouths!

God, if the breakthrough succeeds, protect me from any avarice, give me your Grace, the health to my parents and myself, and we shall be the richest people in the world.



Ivan beside the military headquarters building during a brief rest before the offensive

Fontana Secca, 10 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Tries to keep fast even on the battlefield; God's grace is helping him

Yesterday I fasted the whole day, because the day before yesterday I was too addicted to food (coffee and other things). It was pretty hard; a man is too much the slave of the body. I was in a bad mood due to lack of food. But, in the evening God's Grace helped me. When I thought of myself as being the loneliest man in the world, I heard one guy reading folk poems. I took the book, started to read, spoke with them a little, and they were so enthused, as if by some secret power. I ascribe this to the action of Grace. A man can talk and explain away until the end of the world, but when he is not a man *à la bonheur*, these are barren words. Our generation lacks the strength of will.

One only ought to observe the photographs of present-day celebrities (comedians and other) and see the fat and swollen faces (all that pork that they ate is seen in their faces), the stomachs, the inflated old faces...

Fontana Secca, 12 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Review and critique of Jókarov's novel Traurige Tage

Romantic – historical novel with a strong realistic punch-line, with the world-view of people living in that novel. It suffices to read one work of this writer, written for the common folk, and one sees that it cannot by far satisfy a refined artistic taste. He describes the mutiny of the peasants during the European plague around 1830. (...)

(Here follow the contents of the novel and analysis of its characters)

Fontana Secca, 13 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Everything is ready for the offensive

The offensive starts tomorrow. An immense army is here. The men of the Seventh, our first battalion and others. Tomorrow for two hours I am going to the 110th brigade to line them up. In the night machine gun-fire will start, and at noon they hope to be at Monte Meata.



Soldiers in the trenches on the Italian battlefield

Fontana Secca, 19 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Dramatic description of the offensive

On 15th June at 3 a.m. our machine gun-fire started. I was up at the peak of Fontana Secca and sat in the electrically illuminated cavern with division commander Le Beau, his deputy and others. They played cards using all the French words like *coeur* and others. Not a word about the events that were about to follow, about the dead. They played non-stop until 2 o'clock and 59 minutes. Then they stopped; outside, the cannons were rolled into position. We got out. The earth and the sky were all as if hit by lightning, and a whole orchestra of low and high tones accompanied this magnificent lightning of the clouds, mountains and valleys. I climbed up and observed the lightning of grenades that were exploding on Italian mountains. From different sides fireworks were shooting up from Italian trenches and the whole surrounding was in light. This lasted until 7 a.m. The Italians responded with various calibers; we didn't expect that, we thought they would be poisoned by gas and gas grenades. We had to use masks for gas. At 7:40 a.m. the firing stopped and at 7:50 the news arrived that Solarol, Porte di Sallon is in our hands. Half an hour later the news arrived that Borojević crossed the Piave River. They began to advance and our battalion followed. The first casualties started coming our way, Italians, officers and lads. We heard that many of our troops had died, that the Italians defended themselves well...

Criticizes the command which sacrifices people without reason, helps a wounded Italian

The artillery did not kill the Italians, didn't hit the trenches at all. Our assault patrols (Kovač and Greger) took Solarol (Pyramiden-Kuppe) taking about 70 men prisoner, along with 4 machine guns. The waves of infantry didn't arrive, and the remaining 20 lads defended themselves against the 4th Italian company which swarmed all over our positions once they realized they didn't have to retreat. This is how our command sacrifices people mindlessly. In the most important moments they play cards, uncaring about the most elementary principles of attack.

Under fire we arrived to where we are now, the former officer front-guard positions and went to sleep in the caverns. The sergeants who led the assault patrols came, beautiful men, brave and ready to die without fear. Our people are wonderful, if only there was someone to guide them!

Lying on the floor was a severely wounded Italian officer. His thigh was cut apart like prosciutto, and he was moaning in pain. “*Quanto male Manfredi*”, he repeated in a series of 20-odd times like a machine. He was moaning like that for more than an hour. I had him taken back to the elevation 1580 where a small medical emergency post was situated. I will never forget his thankful look, the squeeze of his bloody hand. He was a wonderful young man. To do an act of love to a man who suffers is the greatest thing in this world. This is the foundation of all spiritual life.

The offensive was brought to a halt. They said, for political reasons. Characteristic of disorder ruling in Austria. The Italian trenches were full of our dead men. Terrible pictures. Terrible stench. Their trenches were deep, badly made and disorderly. The caverns were damp and badly constructed. They said that Krndelj was buried in Rasai. Terrible! That bright face, full of idealism and life, left us in a brief moment! God, have mercy on him!

At the foot of Mt. Solarol, 21 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Here Merz quotes a poem about a Bosniak soldier written by an anonymous author. The poem was composed on the battlefield and gives the picture of a gloomy state of mind among the soldiers.

100 steps below elevation 1672 on Mt. Solarol,
25 June 1918 – (21 years and 6 months)

Difficult situation on the battlefield, breakdown of the Austrian system

We are leading a sad life. We spend the nights in a dark and damp Italian cavern. Here is our command headquarters. I took over the position of adjutant and I am so busy, I can hardly find the time to recollect and say my prayers. There is terrible shooting here. Yesterday twelve lads died. The trenches are bloody; lads are ill due to moisture and bad weather. It is a huge cross for the people. I thank God for having remained healthy in this dampness. The fog and cold are against us.

They say that our army retreated from Montello. Our leadership explains it brilliantly; in other words, the incompetence of the Austrian system. The finger of God is also visible in this. Everywhere a small group of Austrian soldiers overcame the Italian supremacy; and now the supremacy of Austria (material and in manpower) cannot overcome this lousy Italian army. Yes, they thought the wealth of the Italian lowlands was up for grabs! Sin is the cause of the greatest catastrophes of mankind.

The meaning of life is *mysterium crucis*; I must therefore be happy with my present state. But it is hard to be a slave in a system which is so deeply indifferent of our lives and ideas. But where? Where to? On the other side of the trenches it is no better! One ought to use cunning and flee from this system.

Vilaga, 5 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

Overcame illness, hopes for recovery

I was a little bit ill and came down here to recover. Everything is green. I contracted rheumatism, and besides, my health is not as it used to be. I lost a lot of my moral strength, but I gather that in a week's time my health will recover to the previous level.

Vilaga, 6 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

Review and analysis of Strindberg's novel Son of a Servant, critique of pietism

The book is interesting, compared to other works from Nordic literature. Otherwise, it is not of some great value, it is loaded with all kinds of stuff, and the poet has no consistent world-view except doubt; and doubt can never be the foundation for a work of art which must be something whole, harmonic, measured, natural. (...) Strindberg's works are a cry of an unhappy modern man who sees pain, dirt and misfortune everywhere, without a trace of hope that this might be changed over time. But Christianity which Strindberg got to know from Patristics, Protestant pastors and Kierkegaard is a far cry from that great Christianity which remains strong always. But Strindberg was never acquainted with it, and we feel sorry for this lost energy, just as we feel sorry for that entire misfortunate company which constitutes Strindberg's background and which still exists. (...)

The whole work is permeated by the analysis of a religious battle. It is, however, of little interest for us because it does not represent any of the eternal movements in a religious battle which will always be there, until all the people become Catholics (it exists also later, but with a completely different character). This is a provincial, Scandinavian battle. It mainly consists of the emancipation of people from pietism. This religious life of pietists is strange indeed. We shrink from the very thought that a poet could identify that with religious life; moreover, the writer allows himself the freedom to extend these observations of pietism to entire Christianity. This pietism is no religion at all; all the unhealthy pietist asceticism, these prayers, the attitude towards the problem of sexuality, all of that is so miserable that we are sorry for Strindberg or this young man Ivo to have gotten to know Christianity in these degenerates or in the Christianity of Kierkegaard. It seems that Strindberg never even heard about real Christianity, or some strong, optimistic world-view. It is true that the social circumstances which he describes and in which he grew up are bad to the extreme, but this doesn't imply that we should doubt in good or ask ourselves whether there is good in the world at all. The good which he pictures as some relative value (the life of the wealthy in their country houses and other) is not good, because this is a care-free life which leans on the backs of the oppressed. (...)

(Here follows a short overview of the content of the work and a final assessment about the nature of the work which cannot be considered a novel due to various constraints in portraying life.)

Solarol (cavern), 11 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

A dog's life on the battlefield, he got used to mortal danger

A dog's life. I don't sleep any more in a damp cavern. My bed is in an open barracks between lousy lads. I myself am full of lice, dirty and I live like an animal. I don't think at all. The brighter moments are when food comes. I've gotten used to shooting; after all, I'm a beast. Mines and grenades roar and whistle around us, flying over our heads, and we barely care to bend to protect our heads from shrapnel. When one is at the frontline for any length of time, mortal danger becomes an everyday affair and one really doesn't think much about the meaning of life. Admittedly, this is when you don't see the dead, or look at pain face to face. The explosions of mines become like thunder and nothing more. I would be afraid of an onslaught; I think I would be courageous if this war had a foundation in an idea. In that case I would even practice heroism. But like this, I am indifferent and place my destiny into the hands of God who knows best what is good for me; why should I then be afraid?

Solarol (in the cavern), 13 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

*Closely escapes death, thankful for the prayers of his mother and friends,
prays to God to be able to live a saintly life*

A grenade hit our barracks directly; Šime's head was torn off, Šobrt and others gravely wounded, and one young lad was lifted into the air and thrown several meters. I looked at an active captain, a 40-year old, cry at having lost a man. All the others were in a shock, too.

I thank the prayers of my mother and my golden friends for being alive, because I myself – although I think of God a lot – actually pray very little. I lie in the cavern the whole day long, eat something, write a bit, and cannot recollect myself and dive into the huge mystical sea. The other day I saw a priest; I would have liked to kiss the hands which held Christ. Should I hope for better days when I myself will follow in Šime's footsteps?

O God, it would be the best if I was already with you! Burn with the fire of your mercy all the parasites of sin which sneaked into my soul, so that I step before you good and holy; or at least to be inspired in my life with holy joy and superhuman will.

It is easy to write, but difficult to live saintly.

Solarol (cavern), 16 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

Description of a new onslaught and battle

Yesterday we lived through a great onslaught. The Italians were already on the top, and I was seriously contemplating fleeing. Our people are really heroes; they are joyful in battle as if they enjoy showing off their bravery. It is only a pity that they are not enlightened.

For several days, the Italians were shooting with heavy artillery and destroyed the trenches, broke the wires. At 4:30 the onslaught began. Assault patrols were on the top in an instant, the flame-throwers began to fire, they dragged away the *tautscher*³³⁹ which was situated in front of the cavern. They were throwing hand grenades and started shooting from the top with machine guns. Our lads, each for himself, were pushing away the Italians, took many of them prisoner. Many remained dead. The onslaught was attempted twice more, but they didn't reach the top.

Transcription of a touching farewell letter of a killed Italian soldier

This letter³⁴⁰ was found along with postcards and photographs with *caporal maggiore* Luigino Odorico who was killed in front of our wire in the morning of 15 July 1918, during an onslaught on elevation 1672 Mt. Solarol. From the documents and photographs it appears that he was born in 1899 and brought up in a wealthy home. There were photographs of him as a civilian and a soldier with a cape, playing tennis with girls in a cheerful company. There is a silhouette of a girl at a window at dusk, his father and small sister in front of the house with a large door with lattice, renaissance columns with a verandah.

War area, in July 1918

My dearest parents,

I am writing this letter expecting to go on an onslaught, not because I might have a foreboding of my death, but because I have seen it coming and taking us in its vortex when one expects it the least. I therefore want you to know my most intimate thoughts. When I was called to arms, I responded cheerfully, following more the sense of duty than patriotism (which I also possess to a large degree). Both virtues were instilled into my soul more with your example than words. Before the war, my ideas were neutral, but only

³³⁹ Austrian military slang. Probably some kind of cannon

³⁴⁰ Apparently touched by its contents, Merz copied the entire letter into his Diary in Italian as it was written.

because I foresaw that the war will drag on for too long, reducing both the victor and the vanquished into a most miserable state. Now, the reality justifies my thoughts. When the war started, I immediately realized that the only means to extricate from it as soon as possible was to assist the war effort with deeds without many words and that we all should fulfil our duty. It is up to others to judge whether this was done or not. On my part this conviction was my guiding idea.

But I have strayed from what I wanted to tell you.

I want to talk about us. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for striving always to give us a good and deep upbringing and for wanting to offer us a peaceful and happy life. I know that this goal which you have placed in front of yourselves cost you many worries and hard thoughts, but this only makes your merit greater. I am sorry for not being able to return to you all the good which you did for us, but I hope that Pietrino and Federico will fulfil this task and make your life beautiful and happy after the war. I can tell you that, if I had a very happy childhood, this was possible only because there was a deep peace that reigned in our family. This we must thank to You, dear father, who never liked too much knowledge and connections and had an eagle's eye so that persons with dishonest feelings could not have sneaked among us. If I had had the luck to save myself, I would have followed in your footsteps: a healthy and honest enjoyment, without exaggeration and in proper time; allowing access into our family to a small number of persons, but only those who deserve it. I am sorry for one thing, and this is that due to a bad set of circumstances I couldn't become an officer, so I had to be subjected to persons just like me, but rough and arrogant.

I hope I will die worthy of my beautiful homeland thinking of You, dear parents. Not everyone is worthy of our sacrifice, but I choose to ignore them. I think only that I am fighting for You, for my sisters, for my house, for our Italy.

Good bye to all !

Luigino



Dead Italian soldier on the frontline

Italians are fighting for their freedom and their homeland

It is apparent that Italians are now fighting for their freedom and their country, not for the ideas for which they fought at the beginning of war. And here I must fight against the people who are fighting for their homeland?! I must extricate myself from this misfortune, because Austria cannot say that she is defending herself, neither can Germany,

because the troops of the Entente³⁴¹ are everywhere on the defensive and are only defending “their sisters, their houses, their homeland”³⁴² from the assault of the adversary whose aim is to loot and enslave everything.³⁴³

Solarol (cavern), 26 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

Criticizes those who caused the war, complains of meaningless life on the battlefield, considers fleeing, criticizes military chaplains

War! – Slaves – slaves – slaves! White slaves! So many millions are slaves of the few. It is worse than in ancient Greece, Egypt; because today the notions of equality are an axiom, and at that time it was only a premonition.

Today people do not only work for their masters, but go into death and kill others... And the priests of the Church which is timeless come here and are blind at the fact that millions are living like slaves, but in their blindness, remind people of meaningless oaths, as if that empty word, forced upon them was more valuable than human life, the life of the temple of God.

If everyone thought like our priests do, evolution, battle, history wouldn't exist at all. *Fiat voluntas Tua*³⁴⁴ means work, act by yourself to realize the Kingdom of God. On this earth, nothing is achieved without blood. Some are killing millions for an unjust cause, for the realization of the kingdom of Satan: don't the millions have the right to liberate themselves from under the yoke, moreover, in dire necessity to kill them. I gather from this viewpoint that the revolution, war for liberation is allowed... It is terrible, but the meaning of life is terrible.

The living dead. I lie the whole day in my trench and imagine myself being in some kind of tomb. No freedom, no light. The lamp is burning: captain G. reads Dorian Gray, and I receive the reports, put them in metal cases and wait for the food. Really, this is a life below any human dignity. If it weren't for my parents and my homeland, because I trust that this will soon be over, I wouldn't be here one second more. I would seek a different existence for myself.

Offiziers Feldwache

(between Fonte Secco and Mt. Solarol)

31 July 1918 – (21 years and 7 months)

Remembering the late Fr. Ivo Kuvačić, a great opponent of Yugoslavia

I read in the papers that Fr. Ivo Kuvačić³⁴⁵ has died. He was a holy soul. He was undergoing inner battles and arrived at a considerable level of asceticism. He was a philosopher *ex professo*; we liked him most when he would speak about this. He wanted to reveal the sphynx of his people and was fighting until the very end. He was a great opponent of Yugoslavia, and I spoke to him about this problem even on his death bed. We tried to spare him. He would call Šimrak a Byzantine hypocrite and was stigmatizing this whole movement. He was brought up in an Austro-Hungarian spirit and he liked Kralik. Federative Austria as the carrier of Catholicism was his ideal; he never imagined Croatia

³⁴¹ Entente is an alliance created before World War I between Russia, France and Great Britain, with Italy joining in 1915, as a counterweight to the central powers Austro-Hungary and Germany.

³⁴² Allusion at the end of the letter of Luigino Odorico in which he says he is fighting “for his sisters, his house, for Italy”.

³⁴³ "adversary" – Austria and Germany

³⁴⁴ Latin: Thy will be done

³⁴⁵ Fr. Ivan KUVACIĆ (1885–1918). Priest in the Split-Makarska Diocese. From 1912 studied history at the University in Vienna because he was due to become a teacher on the archiepiscopal high school in Split. Merz met him in 1915 during his studies in Vienna, and visited him again two months before his death while attending a course on combat gases in Vienna. Fr. Ivan died on 20 July 1918 in Vienna.

outside of the complex of Catholic nations. His death was something of a symbol of a bankrupt idea, the so-called Austrian idea. With him one of its noble proponents is gone. The new concept of Yugoslavia will surely be the right one, only I wonder if it possesses such noble proponents.

I am a great sinner; I live like a beast, I devour my rations and live like a slave.

Offz. F. W., Solarol, 2 August 1918 – (21 years and 8 months)

Attitude towards women on Java

Yesterday I spoke with a civilian, a young Dutch painter (Fabritius). He works well. He talked a lot about the island of Java. It is interesting there; especially the attitude towards women is sacred. Dance is prohibited, and one is not allowed to touch a girl. To kiss a girl in front of others is scandalous...

Offz. F. W., Solarol, 3 August 1918 – (21 years and 8 months)

Finds support for his ascetic life in the booklet The Imitation of Christ

This is the only important current issue for me: “We should use force frequently and confront the bodily strivings. And not pay attention to what the body wants, but turn our attention so the body – even against its will – is subjected to the soul. And the body should be subjugated for so long, and forced to be obedient to the spirit, until it is prepared for all, until it learns to be happy with just a little and is glad with simple things, without complaining during difficulties.” (Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Book III, Chapter XI, v. 10-11)³⁴⁶

What magnificent, strong words! As if the body were a completely different person with which the spirit does as he pleases. If I could only attain that strength I wouldn't have to torture myself with my body so much.

Offz. F. W., Solarol, Sunday, 4 August 1918 – (21 years and 8 months)

Respects and loves parents and wants them to be good Christians

My father is a noble man; when one is away from home for a longer time, everything can be seen in a much more objective perspective. The position in the surroundings, everything becomes more precise. This is really odd. He is a free man, but with a strong paternal feeling which ties him to me... only he will not reveal it directly, but between the lines and an occasional word, his love for me is so plainly clear that he would be prepared to sacrifice his life for me. May God return this love to him!

And my good mother? She is always in the second place, below the father. She loves only my father and me. She would sacrifice everything for me, disregarding any ethical concerns. She was brought up in a Jewish merchant house and did not absorb any spiritual ideas as a child. My happiest day would be if mother and father became good Christians, if our family would become a Catholic family; because the family is the holiest thing in the world. A lot can be done by prayer. Father is susceptible to logical arguments, and I should only be convincing in proving to him that he was brought up in a prejudiced way, especially when he says that “clericalism” is a prejudice. And with mother, it will be her love which will be the driving force. She should only be brought into a tight corner and she will convert.

³⁴⁶ This quotation in his Diary Merz wrote in Latin. From other quotations in other places, it is visible that Merz read the booklet *The Imitation of Christ* in three languages: Latin, French and German. If he found an interesting quotation, he would note it down in the language in which he read it. He gave to his friend Šime Cvitanović the Latin copy of the booklet, as Cvitanović himself attests in his article *Warrior from the White Mountains*. The German copy is lost. Only the French copy is preserved and it is kept in the Ivan Merz's Archive in Zagreb.



In the trenches on the frontline

Roalte near Bellun, 23 August 1918 – (21 years and 8 months)

After the battles, came back into normal life circumstances, remembers the horrors he lived through on the battlefield

It is beautiful here. The first days I couldn't even orient myself. Fragrant flowers on the table, gleaming in different colors, whiteness of the day and fresh summer nature seemed all like a dream. Or rather, I have a feeling that I had a bad, bad dream about some life in a dark, damp cavern, about the stony nature untouched by the sun, plants or the blessing of God. As if the phantoms of cold have their abode up there, and they chase each other violently, roaring, whistling and flashing. This ugly dream is gone, and I thank God that after a long painful time my parents will be at peace.

Continues the battle against his passions and asks God to help him subdue them

You, man in love: bacon, fresh bread, eat like a horse, drink the juice, let it trickle down the throat and fill the belly! Life? The meaning of everything? You want to be good, to shine wherever you pass, and you are a slave of your eternally hungry stomach which is constantly asking – asking something juicy and strong.

Tomorrow you will die, man! Die! Yes, and the bacon and everything else will still be here lying on the table, but you will be gone, along with your stomach, as if you hadn't eaten anything. You coward, knowing that you are going to die, at least try to liberate your spirit, break the spell of the stomach, you coward!

God, give me that horrendous force to gather all my passions in a fist, to grab them with my right hand and smash them against a rock, to see them crushed like glass and flying away in pieces.

God, God, when will I be able to do that, when will I tread on this earth purified? Help me, God, because it is better not to live at all, than to live in such a way.

Memento mori – the bacon is lurking from the corner. Whoever says that fasting is a stupidity knows absolutely nothing. There is no real spiritual life without fasting; because without it there is no mastery over oneself. And this authority is the most important. God, give me this strong will, even if I have to be naked and barefooted, because if I am alone in this world, it matters little whether I have a star under my neck or whether my elbows stick out from my shirt. The most important is the big "I", the freedom of the spirit which is not afraid of death, everything else is secondary. (I lost 12 kg!)³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ This note shows us that the desire for food which Ivan complains about and which he tried to conquer was not a disorderly greed, but a natural need of a weakened organism, a consequence of losing weight due to suffering and stress at the battlefield.

Banja Luka, 20 September 1918 – (21 years and 9 months)

Review and analysis of Fogazzaro's novel The Saint

Although the novel is formally unrefined, it deserves to be read. It could serve as a model for our contemporary narrators, as well as older ones who often touch upon the problems of a religious man. As a matter of fact, they dare present an exemplary priest, and actually they don't know what is happening in the soul of a truly religious person. This is the first work of this kind that I have read. I am only sorry that the writer in *The Saint* didn't portray an active Christian who works in the world; a great Christian artist (Raphael, Leonardo) or some other great figure (St. Francis of Assisi) who excelled in the field of reforms. If it is not a historical personality, then the whole work is rather illusory. This is the drawback of *The Saint* because the story takes place in our time, in our cities, and we have never heard of this saint.

But still, the work is very interesting. The writer gives an analysis of the religious life of a modern apostle. And this religious life is pictured rather well. Only it is not the religious life of a saint in the literal meaning of the word. Piero Maironi is a saint because the folk call him that, he is not an objective saint. In order to show the spiritual life of a real, proclaimed saint, he should study mysticism a lot. It is only in these mystical works that we glean the inner vistas that God opens to chosen souls and how He acts through them, bringing about those great historical turnabouts that occurred in history.

The idea of the work is religious although the poet's real thought does not come out strongly. He wanted to show that spiritual life, real and deep prayer, is the only source of faith and work because God really lives in us. (...)

(Here follows an account of the content of the work and a detailed analysis of its characters)

Banja Luka, 23 September 1918 – (21 years and 9 months)

Review and critique of Voltaire's tragedy Mahomet

(...) To exploit the historical personality of Mohammad is too much. (...) Voltaire forged history and wrote a tragedy which is of little value because the key protagonist is evil and remains alive, whereas the secondary personalities are the victims of fanaticism and they perish. (...) Voltaire exploited such a great name only to suggest an idea. That's why this work is forgotten today (...)

(Here follows a detailed account of the contents of the tragedy and a critical analysis of its characters)

Banja Luka 24 September 1918 – (21 years and 9 months)

Review and critique of Voltaire's Fable Ce qui plaît aux dames

*Here follows a brief content and a retelling of the fable and its characters with copious quotations in French. Merz gives the following judgement of the work: A rather frivolous fable without artistic value.*³⁴⁸

Banja Luka, 25 September 1918 – (21 years and 9 months)³⁴⁹

Review of the content, analysis and critique of Voltaire's Satire and Les trois manières

³⁴⁸ This is the end of the 13th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 27 January 1918 until 24 September 1918

³⁴⁹ This is the beginning of the 14th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 25 September until 21 November 1918.

Banja Luka, 29 September 1918 – (21 years and 9 months)

Visit to a mine in Ljubija

I was in Ljubija and made a tour of the mine. The work is simple. The amount of iron ore is such that the whole mountain is being torn down by mines and driven away. Everything is very modern; the workers are mostly Italian. This mine will pay off for many hundreds of years. It would be good if industry was introduced in other places as well.

Cidalchis (near Tolmezzo), 4 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Review, analysis and critique of Voltaire's tragedy Tancred

This tragedy possesses a greater artistic value than Mahomet. Historical background with the motif of "love until death". The protagonists suffer because of a misunderstanding which is also Tancred's tragic mistake for having believed the gossip of the world. The acts of heroes – supermen – always interest us. Our nature yearns for something great and beautiful, and it is always pleasant to watch how great persons behave in different situations.

The problem of the relationship of the inner life with external great acts

For me it is an unresolved problem how these people manage to perform great acts irrespective of their inner life, and the exclamations like "God!" and similar are merely a manner of speaking. But I hold that drama, with the exception of those plays whose entire foundation is psychological analysis (Sophocles), must show the external acts of these heroes, presuming that the interior action which is the motivation for external ones happened behind the stage. (...)

(Here follows a review and retelling of the contents of the tragedy, along with a comment and analysis of the characters).

Cidalchis, 5 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Review of the content, analysis and critique of Voltaire's tragedy The Death of Caesar

Cidalchis, 7 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Review of the content, analysis and critique of Rodenbach's work Oak at the Crossroads

Love is being elaborated which, due to the arrival of foreigners ends with infidelity (she), that is, suicide (he)... This happened on a Dutch island which, untouched by civilization, preserved its virginity and its customs. (...) The foreigners began arriving there to build the railway and brought with them envy, alcohol and immorality. The golden age faded away. (...) The work portrays a passage between two epochs. The golden age of virginity and equality in touch with civilization, which triumphs in the end destroying all that is good. (...)

(In the continuation, there follows an extensive review of the content of the work and analysis of the characters)

Cidalchis, 10 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

The meaning of self-sacrifice and the value of suffering which strengthens the energies of life

There must be an order in everything. Suffering is the foundation of life. If I eat only what is most necessary, the body is asking for more (food), but I do not eat and I suffer. Thoughts of temptation harass me, e.g. "you are incapable of working; therefore, eat as much as you can and you will be able to work well." This is a contradiction, because

abstinence is the way to God, and suffering which is generated due to this must strengthen the energies of life – and make us into strong people, not only in the ethical sense, but people fully equipped for life: scientists, workers, etc.

Abstinence isn't an obstacle to scientific work, but moreover, must be its foundation. Today I have such a strong will to translate these views into practice – because, really, I detest myself due to my unconquered passions.



Military action on the Italian battlefield in World War I

Cidalchis, Sunday, 13 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Review and analysis of Rodenbach's novella The Vocation

A very good novella; it is as if Rodenbach raised the novella again on the plateau where it belongs. The Flemish color – folk background – which plays an important role with the writer, gives these novellas (*The Oak at the Crossroads*) lasting value. (...) A boy who feels the priestly vocation within himself is being averted from this by his mother, who gives him the opportunity of committing an impure sin with the maid, in order not to leave her alone. With this, he proved to be unworthy of his vocation. (...) The mother's dream is fulfilled. With this, ethically, this work is completed: it is a sin to oppose the vocation and the mother must repent for this sin because her son is unhappy his whole life. (...)

This novella (people in it) has no pretensions of life. Rodenbach doesn't say whether this solution is good or evil in life... Turgenev would somehow heal his protagonist by social work; we would direct him to practical Catholicism, to the great mission of joint world Christianity, and the writer of the dead city of Brügge, the poet of a nation which lives only in memories, beside which events pass unnoticed, lets these people end their life fruitlessly. These people have no pretensions on life, and they are only interesting "portraits" which live their life hardly touching one another, and in their solitude, they grow pale. These are the people of the dead city of Brügge and this work is magnificent insofar as it is a symbol of dying; similarly, in the first novella "*The Oak at the Crossroads*" he paints the process of the dying of a nation, only with a completely different background. (...)

These people who could have done something in life and could have become "portraits" surrounded by some secret mist which evokes the curiosity of those who don't know their story (because merely to give alms, go to church and living for oneself is no life at all). Ethically, this could have ended differently, but as I said, Rodenbach is the poet of the dead city of Brügge, the poet of the people who have no pretensions on life, and it is

logical that these people must end up fruitlessly; otherwise, Rodenbach wouldn't be Rodenbach. (...)

(In the continuation, there follows an extensive review of the content of this novella, analysis of the characters, comment, assessment and analysis of the immoral sin due to which the young man renounces his priestly vocation, unhappiness of the mother who, due to her selfish love destroys the life of her son, etc.)

Cidalchis, on the day of St. Teresa,
15 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Review and critique of Voltaire's epic Henoïade

A heroic epic of very little value. It is loaded with history and interesting only insofar as it contains interesting historical details. A good epic must be the fruit of a consolidated life view because otherwise the epic collapses by itself. The main protagonist must be an ethical personality and due to that he must behave in accordance with ethical principles which, in the author's view, are correct. (...) The lack of this ruins the whole work. In the whole work, there is not a single noble priest. (...) Along with that, we know that Voltaire himself doesn't believe in Catholicism; moreover, he is its bitter enemy (*Ecrasez l'infame!*³⁵⁰). The work, therefore, doesn't contain a shred of naivete and enthusiasm (Homer, Tasso) which are the main preconditions for an epic. It is obvious that Voltaire is a very learned man, and that this work is the fruit of books, not of life. (...) Along with interesting historical details, one feels that history is intentionally interpreted in a malicious way, everything is tendentious and twisted. (...) The action of this heroic epic which contains many historical events is placed in the period from 1572 until 1590.



*The war is over! By the end of 1918 surviving soldiers return to their homes.
Ivan is among them.*

³⁵⁰ French: "Crush the infamous thing". It is a well-known Voltaire's saying with which he expresses his Satanic hatred of the Catholic Church.

THREE BLESSED FROM WORLD WAR I



Emperor Karl von Habsburg, the last Croatian king, beatified in 2004.



Alojzije Stepinac, a soldier. Beatified in 1998.



*Ivan Merz, a soldier. Beatified in 2003.
Picture by General Ante Gotovina in The Hague, 2009.*

On these pictures, we see three participants in World War I. The first is Karl von Habsburg, the last Austro-Hungarian emperor and Croatian king who, having succeeded Emperor Francis Joseph on the throne, was the chief commander of the Austro-Hungarian army until the end of the war. The second is Alojzije Stepinac, and the third Ivan Merz.

All three of them have lived through the war, each in his own way, without staining their conscience. When Karl von Habsburg ascended to the throne in 1916 he did everything in his might to stop the war as soon as possible. Ivan Merz after the war took the path of newly realized Catholicism as an engaged Catholic layman and apostle of youth. Alojzije Stepinac went to study theology, became a priest, and later on the Archbishop of Zagreb and a cardinal.

All the three of them were declared blessed of the Catholic Church by pope John Paul II: firstly, Cardinal Stepinac in Marija Bistrica in 1998, then Ivan Merz in Banja Luka in 2003, and finally their commander-in-chief from World War I, Karl von Habsburg in Rome in 2004. These three blessed show that one can use even the most adverse circumstances of life for one's own sanctification.

COMMANDER OF THE MASLOVARE COAL MINE near Kotor Varoš in Bosnia 1918

By the end of October 1918, just before the definitive capitulation of Austro-Hungary, Ivan returned from the battlefield to Banja Luka. For him the war was over. He became a civilian and a free man again.

As a lieutenant, already on 1 November 1918, like many of his comrades he placed himself at the disposal of the National Council and entered into the service of the Serb-dominated National Defense. The Military Command of the National Council in Banja Luka, in the decree of 4 November 1918, No. 3838, nominated him a military commander of the Maslovare coal mine near Kotor Varoš.

During the change of government, a tense situation in the Maslovare coal mine occurred: the workers staged a mutiny, partly because they had no food and lacked other necessities. The lives and safety of the management were threatened, and there was also a danger that the railways would remain without coal which was obtained from the Maslovare coal mine. Merz was asked to take command of the coal mine and to ensure the normal work under any circumstances. This was no easy task, but Ivan resolved it correctly. In resolving the crisis, he set out from the principle that brute force must not be used against the workers, but that their just demands must first be satisfied. He took from the military warehouses many of the things the workers lacked, such as shoes, straw mattresses, food and tobacco. The workers became very fond of him immediately and work was continued. They even sent him a fir tree for Christmas, although due to the unsettled political situation it was forbidden to cut trees in the woods and only rare families had a Christmas tree in their home.

Ivan stayed in Maslovare two months, until the end of December 1918. He had a lot of free time, which he largely devoted to reading literary works whose reviews and analyses he noted down in his Diary which was at that time kept with diligence. In the Diary, he continued to analyze his state of mind, not refraining from admitting his weaknesses. He was particularly enthusiastic with the lives of the saints whose biographies he read and who attracted him with their saintly lifestyles.

As these were the first days in the process of the forming of the new Yugoslav State, Ivan gave us very interesting views on the political affairs in those crucial days. His assessments and forecasts for the future of the nations which entered in the new state, formed under Serbian domination, proved incredibly correct, even prophetic. Even in those early days he forecasted the decline of the Karađorđević dynasty, etc.

In continuation, we publish his diary entries written during his stay in Maslovare.

Banja Luka, 24 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

*Review of the content and analysis of Racine's work Iphigénie*³⁵¹

Banja Luka, 25 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

The war has ended, return home, the new state is being founded

The world is dying of the Spanish flu. Modern science didn't find the treatment for it. Austria is falling apart. In Zagreb, the National Council has been formed, unrests in Rijeka...

A new dawn!

*Review of the content and analysis of Racine's work Phèdre*³⁵²

In the work, human defects and passions are presented to the point of absurdity. (...) (Here follows an extensive review of the content of the work and analysis of its characters)

Banja Luka, 29 October 1918 – (21 years and 10 months)

Yugoslavia is being founded

Yugoslavia is formally free. The National Council under the leadership of Korošec, Pavelić and Pribičević is a legitimate authority. The Hungarian railway clerks have fled. The traffic is halted. Meetings are being organized.

Review of the content and analysis of Racine's work Athalie

This is a biblical tragedy which mistakenly carries the title *Athalie*, and is likewise mistakenly taken to be a tragedy. (...) *Athalie* is no tragedy, because *Athalie* herself is not the main protagonist in which our attention is focused and whose death fills us with sadness. On the contrary: we are glad that she dies and are glad that Joas stays alive. Racine has simply dramatized a biblical story. (...) The work was written for a monastery at the time when Louis was underage; it carries some moralizing point. (...)

(Here follows an extensive review of the content of the work and analysis of its characters along with copious quotations)

*Praises the book by bishop Keppler*³⁵³ *More Joy (Mehr Freude) and quotes a passage which he particularly liked*

This is a beautiful book. It is the fruit of a deep spiritual life. The second part is magnificent; it is an apology for Christianity which is so faintly known today:

“Such spiritual joy can be experienced only by someone who is leading a spiritual life, who is used to retiring from the outside world and outside activity into the conclave of the inner world, who can resist the impact of the senses and create an inner world independent of the outside one with a beautiful landscape and secret depths from which the original sources of life emerge. The islands of the saints exist only in the silent ocean of the soul.”

³⁵¹ Merz wrote the review of this work in his Diary in French.

³⁵² This review was also written in French.

³⁵³ Bishop Paul Wilhelm KEPPLER, (1852–1926). A well-known professor of theology in Germany, the writer of many valuable spiritual books and articles. Became the bishop of Rottenburg in 1895.

“The will that was shaped and built for the king, which is not a slave of passions and feelings, and is connected to the forces of the other world which determine the weather for the soul on a certain day and hour is capable, in spite of all vacillations and changes, to set the barometer again on fair weather.”

Banja Luka, 2 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Political and social state of the people after the establishment of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia is free. Four days ago, the local army (Dalmatian cavalry) gained independence. They broke into the warehouse of goods and food and looted everything. They also damaged the hospital. Underground people, crones from different classes, Italian prisoners, showed their heroism. There was shooting the whole day. The army was dispatched after two full days, and the National Council took over the government. These are mainly Serbs who act with inexhaustible energy, showing that they deserve freedom. Their suffering and tears which they shed in these last years in the dungeons strengthened them. Croats work only a little, and every action has a Serbian stamp on it.

Order was quickly reestablished; they established the national army. Although I am happy at being free, I cannot orient myself because everyone is looking at me with some scorn because I am a foreigner. But I hold that this crisis will soon be over. This is an opportunity for me to exercise humility and show that I am free in spirit, without any fear in front of institutions which look askance at all the foreigners.

But, everything is in God's design, and, therefore, I do not fear neither for my parents nor for myself; He is the Father of all of us and takes care of his children until they die.

They say that Tisza³⁵⁴ has been murdered, and in Vienna and Budapest there is mutiny. The front is receding, and the Entente has recognized the state of the South Slavs. It is peaceful, and I am a civilian. Disputes regarding the form of government are already felt.

Maslovare, 14 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Compares the life of Christ and lives of the saints who, as mediators, are closer to him, prays for the grace of his sanctification

Christ's life is too elevated and it is hard for me to rise to such heights, to understand him. The lives of the saints are not at that level, and they are more understandable to me; they are kind of mediators who provide introduction into the grasp of Christ's greatness. I am now reading the life of St. Elisabeth of Thuringia and I read it very gladly. The world of Catholic literature which portrays great and holy people is opening up to me, whereas the profane literature pictures life as it is without pretensions at sanctification. Actually, it pictures the human beast – this is where Zola is right – which acts as it pleases the body; when it undertakes some ethical actions, this is only because sin begets pain and death and in order to remove them even a non-religious person is obliged to create some ethical principles which are today formulated in the science of law...

God, I pray for the Grace to burn my laziness and sensuality. Give my spirit the power over my stomach which wants to subjugate me. Sanctify my body and soul!

Review, critique and judgement of the work Jocaste by Anatole France

This is a description of Jocaste, a woman who married a man whom she doesn't love, hiding her love for another who lacks the energy to propose to her, everything ending in suicide. (...)

³⁵⁴ See Diary entry of 26 July 1914.

(In continuation, there follows an extensive review of the content of the work, followed by Merz's own comment, below.)

Life by itself as A. France presents it contains a degree of poetry. He presents the people of this age, the current generation as it is. It is a life without God, without any unearthly life. Therefore, these people go into coffee-rooms, play snooker, sleep until noon. Women are frightened when the police are coming, they are full of phantasms and feeling bored, not understanding life in the least, consequently they take their own life. This is an immense tragedy; we observe people who are created to be sanctified, to fill themselves with supernatural light through inner battle, and here they live as if this whole life was a mere accident of nature and after it emptiness follows. I am sure that A. France is not aware of that himself; the work ends with cynicism in the manner of Bazarov, full of tragedy. This is because the poet himself is waking to some unknown, warm hope. René, the main protagonist, discovers with ironic smile the symptoms of an incurable disease; this is a sad smile, reflecting the irony of his whole life after which there follows an equally puzzling chapter – death. It is a smile with a tear in the eye, a tear full of sadness for the lost paradise.

This is an interesting work, because it documents our age and one could weep over this humanity which lives so sadly, not knowing even the most primitive things. It is terrible to look at these people having such gifts (René is an excellent physician and scientist) and an incorrupt interior living alone for themselves, not being of use to anyone or sad and dissatisfied with a cynical smile, ridiculing themselves. (...)



Maslovare near Kotor Varoš (Bosnia). Picture from the time when Ivan was there.

Maslovare, 21 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Restrained himself not to kiss some teacher

I could barely restrain myself from kissing a teacher, Irma, with whom I shared a ride from Banja Luka. I thought that I was firm in this respect; even the typical female behavior, walking to and fro, getting closer, movement of the lips, speaking in interrupted sentences, everything was sending a message: come, kiss, embrace me. I was close to doing that, but with God's help I restrained myself. Later, I observed her face in detail: the shine of the nose, thin blue capillaries above the nose, fine dark color below the eyes – all of this was revealing that her soul is not virgin, that she has been through a lot of student smooching. In all of that, sin was rather prevalent, and the evil dreams after this encounter revealed the tragedy of this sin. Apart from God, I thought of Zora; I am convinced that

she would reject such a temptation with more bravery. Otherwise, I lost a lot of that inner joy which is a proof of God's Grace.³⁵⁵

Maslovare, 23 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)³⁵⁶

Thoughts about the spiritual greatness of saints after reading the biography of St. Elisabeth by A. Stolz and criticism of modern literature

Oh, ideal life! How much struggle, how much search in old cultured people for an ideal of life; how close to Truth were Plato, Aristotle, and still, how many mistakes. We must be more than happy because Christianity with its legion of saints, I exclude Christ as he is too high, in the most varied of circumstances represent an idea of life which reaches the level of harmony with the entire macrocosm, so that, just like to the first Adam, everything yields to them.

Alban Stolz has written a classical work: the best biography of a saint that I read so far. Usually saints are portrayed as terrible, dark characters, with an angry skinning face who flagellate themselves – terrible! – whereas actually these are creatures of light, full of inner joy and happiness whose beauty is reflected in their bodies. These are ideal beings: superhuman in the best sense of the term. They are the lights and pillars of the Church who can grow to such unreachable heights on a single tree.

All religions and confessions can have saintly people in the Catholic sense; but to rise to such heights as St. Teresa, St. Elisabeth and St. Francis of Assisi is possible only on the tree of the mystical body of Christ, imbibing the Holy Spirit, so to say, directly and materially.

Stolz by himself is a great man; otherwise he could never understand certain moments of sanctity. Our entire life – as is said in the foreword – is illuminated by supernatural light; the meaning of every pain, every event Stolz tried to interpret in accordance with God's will. It is impossible to quote all the details; the book encompasses an entire life and the whole life can be read without interruption. It paves the way to a new great art: the Catholic one. The work is the fruit of German Catholic literature and is a guidepost to us. It is full of eternal motifs: painting, music, sculpture, and what is essential and most important – life itself. They sanctify it and create people who will be the carriers of great ideas, who will fertilize every branch of culture and again create great works.

Great, saintly people are the source of everything; they are the pioneers of the Kingdom of God on earth. And this Kingdom is not the world as the opponents of Christianity, often rightly, imagine – people who in beautiful warm suits go to mass on Sunday, while the poor women freeze outside, priests who are engaged in commerce and have no propensity for a modern sermon; this would be a life full of warmth and self-sacrifice where one would take pity on another and try to help and wouldn't look (I am just reading *The Famished Cat* by Anatole France) with a smile on the lips when a young man makes an offense against the sixth commandment, this sin above the other sins, that eternal catastrophe which leaves a man without any spirituality and eternal glory for which he was predestined. No, in modern literature there is no love of one's neighbor. Modern works were written by people who let loose their instincts, not basically different from animals – enjoying; or people who suffered but were unable to permeate and consecrate their pain to supernatural goals, but suffering instinctively just like the animals, in fury against their persecutors, complaining of social circumstances, of others, and never themselves. Precisely what makes man a man – a holy being predestined for glory

³⁵⁵ Here ends the 14th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 25 September until 21 November 1918.

³⁵⁶ This is the beginning of the 15th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 23 November 1918 until 15 July 1919.

(Kuvačić,³⁵⁷ pray for me!) such as humility, self-denial, is not found in our artists. Moreover, they imbue their so-called nature, their "I" (what in essence is their animal nature) with narcotic substances and write in such a super-animalistic state. It goes without saying that such art is sick and lethal. It is a glorification of "Überteufeltum". (Stipe!)³⁵⁸

The absolute power of the spirit is unknown to a contemporary artist. If any of them experienced a battle for sanctity, he or she would be full of inexhaustible motifs. All of that would exuberate and enthuse. By contrast, contemporary art is naked; the cult of the nude, flesh and animal freedom – the consequences of these sins – despicable lives, poor, limited white slaves, this is its content. Great art, holy art! That act of St. Elisabeth when she crosses a stream and one female beggar (to whom she used to give alms) throws her into the water because there was a time when she was wearing silver and gold, and Elisabeth not only forgives her, but in her childish soul thanks her because she deserved that punishment – this has more worth than the entire Modern art.

The holy childlike naivete, more valuable than all the riches of the world, what has it created in practical life, what in art?! The greatness of Homer and our folk poetry is based precisely on naivete. And what about the work of art based on Christian naivete?! This will be the greatest work of art in the world; a masterpiece, brilliant and permeated with glory. That would be a work of art; and the life of holy souls are works of art above other works of art, superseding human reason, heavenly phenomena on earth in front of which one ought to kneel and cry of immeasurable joy, while millions of angelic voices in all the tonalities – from the highest sopranos to most resonant bases will sing: Gloria, Gloria, Gloria.

(Here follows a brief account of the biography of St. Elisabeth)

It is impossible to give the details, one would have to copy the whole book. Everything is a real, true, warm life. It is a work of immense cultural and historical value. This age is really portrayed magnificently. The prophecies of the Blessed Virgin Mary are interesting; a wonderful psychological analysis of her virginity, and even if it were only a legend, we would have to admire the artist who managed to enter into the psyche of the Madonna. Her life is so elevated that we, ordinary people, think we must perish. This is an enormous height; the work of God's Grace. But, we shouldn't despair because we are so far below her. She is the guidepost and we should be humble and pray and the dear God will not leave us.

St. Elisabeth, pray for us!

Maslovare, 26 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Philosophical and literary thoughts about laughter as the fruit of human imperfection

Laughter is the flower of this earth. On the other world, spirits will be happy, but they will not laugh. Sincere, pure laughter is the fruit of imperfection, a weakness which is the consequence of sin. Adam did not laugh in paradise; the expelled Adam in his lighter moments of idleness had the motive to laugh. And the centuries of culture are actually a treasury of laughter, because the consequences of imperfection of the current microcosm, accumulated through centuries are inexhaustible. The center of laughter is man who is largely the product of his environment, and depending on this environment a man is funny or less funny. Therefore, we see interesting representatives of funny characters in Molière, Daudet, Spitzweg and France. These are funny characters who became funny without any

³⁵⁷ See note about the late Fr. I. Kuvačić in Diary entry of 31 July 1918.

³⁵⁸ German: Überteufeltum – the word doesn't exist in a German dictionary, but is an amateur complex word consisting of two words, meaning the devilish presence in modern art which is being glorified by that same art.

ethical guilt on their part. Therefore, for the judgement of the comical in literature only one thing should be relevant: is this comical trait caused by sin, i.e. a conscious transgression of ethical laws, or is it a consequence of imperfection. This imperfection too is, admittedly, the fruit of a sin, mostly hereditary (because the consequences of a specific sin committed by an ancestor are transmitted through generations) in a general sense, but it is not a sin of the concrete person because this person doesn't know that he or she is thereby sinning. It would be a different matter if this character would become aware of his or her funniness but would be so lazy not to strive to get rid of it. In this moment, the entire humor is destroyed and its representative is a creature which should evoke our compassion, not our laughter. This is where modern art is particularly wrong. Not having a correct notion of sin, or clearly speaking, not having a unified world-view (even a pagan one), it presents as funny something that must move us to tears, to evoke our compassion. Let them only have a look at Molière, Shakespeare, Cervantes and others, and they will realize that the basis of classical humor is a firmly constructed world-view, whereas everything else is a terrible crime, a poison that destroys human dignity and human purpose. It is the sin of egoism, worse than salacious stories in today's sub-animal humorous papers.

Review, analysis and critique of the work The Famished Cat by Anatole France

France has no established world-view and *The Famished Cat* is therefore not a cohesive work, either technically or on the level of ideas. This work in which France caricatures the Parisian bohemians in the manner of Spitzweg is nevertheless worth reading. These caricatures are the foundation of the work and they are the reason why it was written. Here one can see that the poet has made his unique judgement of these people and succeeded in presenting them in a certain light.

A few words about the positive side of the work. Reading the descriptions of these people, one unwittingly remembers Spitzweg, with one difference – Spitzweg is much brighter and lighter, whereas these people are surrounded by some tragic veil so that laughter is interrupted at one point by a tear in the eye; these are poor, fruitless people, grown from a soil without God and apart from nature, among the walls of Paris, in the maelstrom of character-less modern society, sucking the poison from the books of modern philosophy, with its immense range of different world-views. It is natural that the products of such circumstances must be comical people, comical almost without their guilt, but this is a bitter humor because it evokes in the reader sympathy towards these people who will die, not succeeding in rising at least a little bit above the comical everyday events in which they are caught. (...)

(In the continuation, there follows a lengthy review of the content of the work, quotations from the works, analysis and critique of its characters).



Building of the management of the Maslovare mine in which Ivan worked as director

Maslovare, 27 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Review of political circumstances and nomination of the King of Yugoslavia

They say that King Peter has been nominated the King of Yugoslavia. I obey if this is a deal brokered by Korošec into whom I trust, but I am very sorry that it is not a republic, which will ultimately emerge. Apart from that, I don't find the Karađorđević dynasty very likeable. However, if the state will be democratically ordered with a king as figurehead only, without the possibility to decide on war or peace, and if the power of veto is taken away from him, it will be good.

Current circumstances in which he lives and works, criticizes his weak faith, fears the wolves, shoots at a dog

I am leading an immensely comfortable life: I can freely say an ideal life. I work for myself and read to my heart's desire. I listen to the people, especially women. A terrible immorality has taken over the people. Women are sunk into insipidity and stubbornness; especially a certain Toda Lazarević, a beautiful waitress who, in her stubbornness doesn't yield to anybody.

Otherwise, I criticize others a lot, and I myself am a terrible coward. I am afraid of wolves, and a little while ago I fired a couple of shots at the dog of my landlord Urbais and luckily, I missed. This is an excellent opportunity to exercise faith in practice; to go into scary places at night. God, God help me overcome this unfortunate cowardice in me.

Maslovare, 29 November 1918 – (21 years and 11 months)

Overview of the current political situation, Serbs usurp political power, base their authority of force, Catholics depressed, forecasts the collapse of the Karađorđević dynasty

Really, the mentality of the Serbs is completely different from the Croatian – Catholic one. In them one sees such immense enthusiasm, such happiness as if they were in heaven. They usurped the will of the nation and proclaimed Peter the king, although the Muslims and Catholics opposed this. They commit the same mistakes into which Austria had fallen: they build their power on force.

The Croats – Catholics won their freedom, but they are all depressed. This is because they feel that now they have much less freedom than before. If Peter really starts to rule and the Serbs try to conquer all, there will be resistance which will topple the Karađorđevićs from power. We do not need kings and hegemonies: we want justice and love!

Catholics cannot be so enthusiastic because they have that unconscious cosmopolitan character which doesn't know enemies who are completely evil, or friends who are ideals of goodness. The Catholic mentality is unconscious in our people, and they will never show such revolutionary tendencies which demand even innocent victims. The Catholic evolution is slow and merciful. Someone might retort by saying that without a revolutionary tendency this overturn and freedom would never come about. Not as fast. But this is actually only a formal freedom which the people don't understand; the intelligentsia is drunk on happiness and alcohol, and the peasants are facing a material, but most of all, moral ruin. The Serbian peasant has fallen morally very low. I still don't know our peasant. Freedom is really a beautiful thing; but the effects of freedom are still not felt as they should be.

Review, analysis and critique of the work Blue Bird by M. Maeterlinck and his philosophy which is not fit for life

It is a beautiful dream, but the fruit of a comfortable life. Only one side of life is touched, of course, the happy one, and the mystery of suffering, fear, heroism doesn't touch the author at all. The philosophy reflected in this drama can satisfy only the bourgeoisie of the rich and the poor who are leading their normal, pre-war lives. Today

this work does not satisfy us in the least; this generation is facing new, eternal problems which we want to solve. Not a word is found on this in Maeterlinck's work. Christianity has resolved these problems long ago, and this world war only confirmed its truth and greatness. This work is the product of a Flemish life where misery and pain were non-existent. To be poor in their land meant not to have cakes and sugar every day, but all the other necessities were available in abundance. But how is this work going to satisfy a man who doesn't have clothes in the midst of winter, neither shelter nor food. Here the response about different ways of happiness does not satisfy, and Christianity with a single parable "foxes have dens and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" shows that there is Someone who is carrying his cross beside him (Drago: sermon of a military chaplain) and with its philosophy of patience and a view on supernatural life resolves every detail.

We must acknowledge Maeterlinck's noble tendencies and the understanding of this side of life (that people seek happiness within and around themselves, not where they are not), and thus they will be much happier. Here he got close to Christianity who also loves these small, naïve joys (Kepler, *Mehr Freude* and St. Francis), but reading this work one feels pity at such an enormous effort of these people who are sincerely looking for Truth somewhere far, without bothering to look near them, without seeing Christianity. With this, Maeterlinck speaks against himself: isn't the blue bird so close, hasn't Christianity solved all the problems universally? Looking for the Truth, Maeterlinck didn't solve the most important problem, the problem of death, or, if he believes his story, he is more naïve than a child. Maeterlinck portrays death symbolically: dead persons exist for him only in human imagination, and when we don't remember them, they are asleep. In other words, objectively they don't exist anymore. Nice consolation! In that case, I don't understand happiness either – to be good, when it vanishes with death, what does it mean to be good at all? Among the modern people, everybody is convinced that they are good, and again we have such crimes and such catastrophes occurring.

Otherwise, it is interesting to read this work because with its nobility and a classical peace it has a pleasing effect: but due to its modern disbelieving philanthropy it deserves to be put on the index. This work will have a good impact only on people who live nicely and honestly, but if you put in front of these people any elementary pain, if they are put to shame or persecuted, not being able to illuminate with this eudemonistic philosophy this dark side of life, they will resort to suicide. I spoke to many people who hold this world view who said that in case of misfortune they will kill themselves.

And there are so many people who suffer incessantly, so many who slave for years and years hungry and thirsty, so many whose toil has come to nothing. What could we hear from those who are practically always pursued by misfortune and in the end, die exhausted? Should they have committed suicide? Is pain meaningless? Maeterlinck has no answer. Therefore, he will be a favorite of the city audiences who life happily but will not penetrate into broader circles. His philosophy is not fit for life.

Analysis of the drama: The Blue Bird is a symbol of absolute happiness, the secret of life, the stone of wisdom, something like God, only Maeterlinck didn't feel the greatness of that. It is a type of pantheism and materialism, similar to the primeval force, electrons with primeval energy who are the source of movement, as well as happiness. (...)

A Christian artist could never create such a work because he is faced with a life view that is complete, his task is only to discover its greatness, to delve into it and to build it within himself. If a modern artist fully went through this battle, he would have to arrive at the result that the blue bird is God's love. Such an artist would have to convert, and his work would retain the structure of Maeterlinck's work, but with a Christian idea. It would be a work of art in the full sense of the word. As it is, it has many beautiful extracts, but the foundations are too hollow. (...)

(Here follows a very detailed account of the drama, literary analysis of the characters and a literary assessment of the technique by which the play was built, with a comment and critique of the writer's claims which are contrary to the Christian world-view).



Forest railway track for the transport of coal from the Maslovare mine to Banja Luka

Maslovare, 12 December 1918 – (22 years)

Review and critique of Beaumarchaise's comedy The Marriage of Figaro

(...) This comedy already represents a decadent art and only such company is able to enjoy it. Everything is centered around the motif of lewdness which the writer elaborated too carelessly. Such content is not at all fit for a comedy, maybe some drama. Art must always stand in harmony with life: it must edify and sanctify life, and not ruin it. Although the end of the comedy is partially ethically satisfying – the count remains cheated and Figaro gets the inviolate Susanna – still all of them – Figaro, Susanna, the countess and other characters are low people who take chastity too lightly. (...)

(Here follows a review and retelling of the content of the comedy, literary analysis and assessment of the characters)

Maslovare, 13 December 1918 – (22 years)

A short review and comment of the comedy A Night in Venice by Alfred de Musset

Maslovare, 16 December 1918 – (22 years)

The death of the Bosnian Archbishop J. Stadler

Stadler³⁵⁹ has died... He had many opponents; they called him an Austrophile, a rich man, merchant... I felt that he must be an extraordinary person when they persecuted him so much...

³⁵⁹ Archbishop Josip STADLER (1843–1918), born in Slavonski Brod, completed his studies in Rome, and upon return to Zagreb became professor of philosophy and theology. With the renewal of a regular church hierarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1881, he was nominated the first Bosnian archbishop. He was initiator of numerous pastoral activities, built the Sarajevo cathedral, seminary, seminary in Travnik, and a range of charities. He also initiated several magazines. He was the founder of the order of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus. The procedure of his beatification is in progress.

(An extended review and comment on the lyric drama André del Sarto by Alfred de Musset and criticism of his neo-pagan understanding of love and life.)

This is a vivacious lyrical drama which provides interesting reading. It is one of the rare Musset's dramas in which the dramatic action is so strong that it could be put on stage. It carries the subjective, lyrical character and Musset's mentality of adoration of women, love, beauty with a refined erotic point; he has lived through this content and the historic story of André del Sarto is only a vesture, because Musset in the drama presented himself in the character of Cordiani. The work is an apology for love, women and beauty.

So, the romance has come to life again and reestablished the ruptured connection with religion. Musset remained standing half way. All his ideology is Hellenic; he is a lyric epigone of the Renaissance. That all-powerful cult of beauty and love which played such an important role in Musset's life is the same which was the inspiration for classical artists, the inspiration for which they lived and died. This absolute adoration of women is hardly understandable for us today, but it actually existed. But, as this life-view, although hiding great truths in it, is not by itself an ideal to which everything else must be subjugated, by ethical consequence it must cause catastrophe in life. Great Christian ideas of self-denial and sacrifice are the only ones capable of elevating a healthy yearning for love. Abandoning oneself absolutely to that love, as Musset's protagonists do, is a terrible crime! All idealization of the persons and motifs is in vain, because the seducer of a woman, no matter how platonic their love may be (in Musset this is connected to the bodily passion, as human nature demands), remains a weakling and an unworthy man. Musset presented Cordiani in a rather ideal manner, because according to Musset's pagan ideology this love is an elementary element of fate which destroys everything that opposes it. (...)

It is difficult to ethically analyze the entire drama: it is composed entirely on neo-pagan foundations and is the fruit of a lyric soul permeated with the cult of beauty and love (*l'art pour l'art*) according to a natural instinct without any philosophical foundation. Christianity would resolve the motif of love of a woman in a completely different way that would ethically satisfy all sides. Many tears would be shed in the process, sacrifice and heroism would be demanded... and this conceals in itself great poetry.

But Musset wasn't writing for life, his works have no pretension to build. Musset is an idealist, and this drama by its topic and philosophy is the guidepost for a modern naturalist drama which draws consequences from this philosophy: freedom of love in the broadest sense is the motto of modern drama and modern life. (...)

Relationship of the lyric and drama in Musset, search for the Truth and God's love

What is fit for lyrical poetry is not fit for a drama. A drama must be an objective rounded whole; a harmonious life-view built on an idea. A lyricist is freer in expressing his subjective feelings, his inner turmoil, even if they are the consequence of a sinful state. Therefore, this drama should be taken as a dramatized poem which is the product of Musset's disappointment in love: he believed that he had caught the phantom of love, and she double-crossed him. Lyrics give momentary feelings, extracts of inner life. It goes without saying that only a great man who either searches for the Truth or advances in love of God can be a good lyricist; these poems can be the pearls of lyrical writing, they can extol the greatness of God, just as hell is an anthem to God's justice. The lyric background of *André del Sarto* can be seen as a lyric extract (poem) from Musset's life-history of searching for Love. If he failed in finding true Love but found something else instead, it is not a matter for literary criticism to debate whether he steered off the road by his own guilt or not. Musset is worthy of reading and studying, even if he didn't find the solution he was looking for. For us it suffices that he was searching! (...)

(Here follows and extensive review and narration of the content of the drama, literary analysis of the characters, along with a comment and critique of the views which are not in accordance with the Christian world-view.)

Maslovare, 17 December 1918 – (22 years)

A review and critique of the drama The Moods of Marianne by Alfred de Musset

In this drama two age-old literary motifs are elaborated: love towards a young woman with an old husband and the motif of a timid lover. Ethical shortcomings and an excessively subjective understanding of art influenced this work too, and therefore, like the other two works, it doesn't represent a harmonious whole. (...)

The character of Marianne is extraordinary... Yes, this is a modern woman who lives instinctively (i.e. sinfully) without any ideology. This woman is not among the people who contribute to cultural development, it is a woman that was exploited and suppressed for centuries, and who was only a matter of love and pleasure, and never a creature of reason – a human being. This is a lover who is the center of decadent poetry of all the centuries, and Musset did not have the spiritual power to rise above temporality and like Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe perceive what makes a woman a human being and a woman.

(Here follows an extensive review, analysis and comment of the drama and its characters.)

Decadent poetry of the cult of beauty and love ignores ethics and its values

This whole poetry is the product of an age in which people were fed and safe. There was no struggle for life or fear. People were idle, and therefore, they analyzed and observed themselves and everything around them one-sidedly. Ethical motifs for this whole poetry have no value; they create people and types without any ethical pretensions. All social forms are merely a backdrop (the marriage of Claudius, etc.) and the only reality is refined eroticism. An age which knows no battle or heroics cannot understand ethics: for them it doesn't exist. For this reason, they turn all their attention to esthetics: the cult of beauty is everything, but as its only foundation is the subjective instinct, it creates only subjective values, not objective – eternal ones. In that same age of idleness, beautiful nature where one doesn't think of death, the sexual drive is always on the surface, and therefore, we see that in such epochs the poetry of love – even if the erotic element is spiritualized – is the main pillar of the arts. An age without ethical values cannot create a great work of art.

Maslovare, Greta's birthday, 18 December 1918 – (22 years)

May God have mercy on her!³⁶⁰

Review of the content and critique of the comedy Fantasio by Alfred de Musset

From the ethical viewpoint, this work is Musset's best drama. Social economy and its result satisfy us completely. The character of the work is also subjective, only in this work it is not so bothersome.

(Here follows an extensive narration of the content of the comedy)

³⁶⁰ This is the last time that Merz mentions Greta in his Diary. After this date, she disappears from his life! Five years have passed since her death (she died in July 1913). His Diary entry of 8 July 1914 becomes fully actual now. Speaking about his former love for this girl he wrote: "It has passed, I remember, it ennobled me, but one can live without it!" Other values and ideals are now in front of him.

A review of the biography of St. Josaphat Kuncević³⁶¹.

A preeminent place of biographies in literature, saints like Alpine mountains

The lives of God's saints are the most elevated topic of literature. A biography, even the worst one, hides within itself so much poetry and so much value because this is the life of the saint itself. God's Church is a garden in which different saints thrive. All of them are so similar, and again, what a difference between a St. Teresa and St. Francis, St. Elisabeth and St. Thomas, St. Augustine and St. Josaphat. All of them are super-humans who share the same foundation: a mystical union with God, absolute mastery over the body and an evangelic love of their neighbor. Due to the Grace of God, some excelled in their organizational work, others in mystical and poetic life, a third in material struggle, a fourth in the scientific arena. All these are precipitous heights like Alpine mountains where the air is clean and from where one observes mankind from a completely different perspective. And we, ordinary people are like tourists who desire to reach those peaks, but having arrived at a certain altitude cannot go further... Either we slip or fall into the precipice.

In the life of a saint surely the most interesting is his or her own spiritual and bodily life; his activity in society is only a consequence of the above. St. Josaphat used to rise at 2 a.m. in the summer and at 3 a.m. in the winter. He ate in the evening, after having completed all his assignments, slept on a hard bunk, abstained from meat and flagellated himself until blood was flowing from him. In prayer, people saw him, as they did many other saints, illuminated by an unearthly light and elevated above the ground. What was going on in his soul in those moments, we cannot even guess. Due to God's Grace, which he derived by prayer, he attained such bravery that he went into death joyfully. Really, for a saintly soul there is no great and more elevated desire than the crown of martyrdom.

This is the crown of inner satisfaction for having gained mastery over the body and for being similar to his Betrothed so that he can, united with him in the cross, feel the greatest inner delight possible in this world. Such was his inner life.

*The necessity of introducing folk forms into Church life,
Romanic color is not the only one*

Christ came into the world to sanctify all nature, to sanctify every person and every nation. Therefore, I hold that it is a mistake on the part of the Church leaders when they fear giving greater freedom to national forms of Church life.³⁶² It is precisely in this that the eternal nature of the Spirit which leads the Church must be shown, that He can hold this great organization together in unity and power along with every form, every language, every national element whose mentality and specific color were placed in the service of elevating the Church. The Romanic color has until now given the greatest values to the Church, but it is not, even in the designs of God's Providence, the only color. National liturgies must be attached to the vine of the Church, and so, the huge torrents of life will enter into her which will regenerate the entire nation. It is hardly understandable for us today, but the history of the Church will judge differently. The Church is a living organism which develops, and she has just lived through the Romanic or Latin phase because the Romanic nations were the carriers of the Catholic culture until now. The Germans, due to Protestantism, did not contribute by far in equal measure to the development of the Church, and all the future now rests on the Christian Slavs. If they join, it will be all the better for them, and the Church will gain enormous values; they will

³⁶¹ St. Josaphat KUNCEVIĆ (1580–1623). Born in the Ukraine of Orthodox parents. Entered the order of Basilian monks and accepted the Catholic faith. Became the archbishop of Polock. Worked tirelessly for the union of the Orthodox Christians with the Roman Church. For this reason, he suffered martyrdom and death in 1623. His body was taken to the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

³⁶² This is a very interesting reflection by the Bl. Ivan Merz.. Many of these prophetic ideas came true at the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Merz felt a need for these changes and wrote about this fifty years earlier!

pull the Church from under the Latin sphere and broaden her international horizon so that great old books of wisdom like Thomas's, Augustine's will appear in national languages; folk customs will rule the Church and some Truths, to whom the nature of these nations is more inclined and who were somehow unnoticed and obscured until now, will emerge in their sanctity and greatness in the form of new saints out in the open.

The problem of Eastern-rite Catholic Churches is the most important for our current circumstances; Bosnia has the great mission to unite the Orthodoxy to Rome and thus become the signpost for the entire East. There will be a great battle, as is visible from the life of St. Josaphat. Religious negligence and ignorance are the greatest enemies of this union. Josaphat was persecuted and killed because of this. It was only after his death that they saw his greatness and a vast crowd for whom he sacrificed himself converted. The Russian Church until the most recent times persecuted in a bloodthirsty manner the Eastern-rite Catholic people and the memory of that man.

Maslovare, 20. XII. 1918. – (22 g.)

Review of the content, analysis and critique of the drama

Don't Play with Love by Alfred de Musset

This is by far Musset's most powerful drama; all of the poet's virtues and mistakes are exposed here. The talent for caricature is unique and in this play it reached its peak. (...) One sees also the elementary shortage of the poet's art which destroys art and kills the happiness of life. The poet revels in numerous sins which he presents in the play. (...) There is no human love prepared to sacrifice itself. Musset has grown up in an egoistic society which has everything necessary for living and which doesn't care in the least for the pains and needs of one's neighbors. Here we find romance which lasts as long until sacrifices are demanded. (...) We admire the Musset's technical prowess in creating such characters, but like him, we cannot enjoy them; these are nasty people. (...) And to describe such people with gusto defiles and violates art! (...) Everything is love, everything is centered around love! ("Happy" are the people who have no other worries, don't have to struggle with life and can only analyze love feelings in all their nuances!) (...)

Criticizes Musset's understanding of love and marriage

That Musset's only religion is the love of a woman is proved by the final words from this drama which he quotes in a letter to Georges Sand. (...) There is some truth in Musset's philosophy in which love sanctifies a marriage. But Musset got stuck in that and here his enormous one-sidedness is manifested: he never strived to resolve the problem of marriage in poetry. All the marriages in his dramas are only an outer social form, and all marriages which he presents us or about which he speaks are without children. It is strange that Musset got stuck right here; did he use artificial means not to beget children from his loves? It would be incredible for an idealized concept of his love, but a child is a real fact which he couldn't fit into his philosophy of love. Therefore, there is no mention of a child anywhere; this also proves the inadequacy of his philosophy. (...) He is dissatisfied in spite of all his philosophy and in the depths of his soul there remains a feeling that he didn't resolve the problem... Naked truth and poetry of human imperfection permeates all his works. (...) All of Musset's dramas were written from 1830 until 1834, i.e. between his 20th and 24th year. It is, therefore, understandable that a poet at such a young age couldn't create anything positive, ethical. He had a huge lyric talent and for him at that early age, while the sexual life is the strongest, love played the greatest role. It was his religion. (...)

(Here follows a detailed account of the content of the drama, analysis of characters with numerous quotations from the play)

Maslovare, 27 December 1918 – (22 years)

Holy poverty! Not worrying about sensual pleasures! To give away everything and ardently love one's neighbor, how much joy it carries with it! And fear vanishes by itself. Therefore, try to live a certain period of time as your conscience tells You, and you will be happy, not fearing death.

Fear of the night and wolves is only the proof that something is wrong with you. Why do you fear, man of little faith! I don't sleep; I am always with You and watch over You even if you think that I sleep. As on the boat – you are no safer in a warm, closed room compared with a dark forest surrounded by howling wolves. Why are you afraid of death and pain? I know when and how you are going to die, and I burn with love for You, so do you think that I'm going to leave You?! Even if I allow the wolves to tear you apart, don't you think that this is my decision and that I don't love you less for that? Don't fear anyone, my son, and if Your body rots, You will go on existing.

O, my God, give me the strength to love You ardently, to believe in You so firmly that I can walk through the places which threaten me with death without any fear, innocent like a child to whom no one has been talking about fear.

Banja Luka, 28 December 1918 – (22 years)

Review of the content, analysis and critique of Molière's drama The School for Husbands

This is among the worst of Molière's dramas. But, in all the works it pops out clearly that the structure is ethically founded (e.g. he doesn't touch the sanctity of marriage), although the details are in themselves realistic. At the end, the observer is satisfied: justice wins.

(Here follows a short account of the content of the drama and analysis of its characters)

Banja Luka, 3 January 1919 – (22 years and 1 month)

Review and comment on Pascal's work Thoughts, criticizes his Jansenistic spirit and the lack of Christian joy and mysticism

I don't like the first part: these are the debates and dissertations purely theoretical about various philosophical methods. The second part is very interesting and here Pascal's spirit is strongly felt, his talent to defend and elevate Christianity with the meticulousness of a genius. These are known things today, but they reveal his genius, how strongly he understood life and the Bible. There are also some heresies there, and everything is permeated by his illness; therefore, he is too rigorous. There is little talk about the joy of life and the joy of creation (of the Christ's Church), which is also a characteristic of Christianity. The proofs are clear, but everything is too permeated by the strict Jansenistic tone, and it looks as if this life is a misfortune for man, and that holy people should walk around with sad faces. And reality is just the opposite! Inner joy which comes about due to abandoning to God's will transmits a part of glory into this world. Pascal's prayer is proof that he arrived at a certain degree of elevation and could go no further. This is a feature of an ordinary, honest soul, but one doesn't feel the eternal elevation of Mysticism, the scent and poetry of Heaven when it is close by. What a difference between the outpourings of saints (O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary – St. Bernard) and those long prayers of Pascal into which he weaves the proofs of reason only to convince himself in the truth of Christianity. Pascal is a speculative Christian philosopher, far from mysticism. His thoughts about the coming of the Messiah, about the original sin, about the blindness of the society of his time are mostly in accordance with the teaching of the Church. (...)

Epilogue of Ivan's war path

CHAPEL CONSECRATED TO THE BLESSED IVAN MERZ ON THE FORMER ITALIAN BATTLEFIELD

As a conclusion of the war period of Ivan's life we bring this item of interest. The first chapel built and consecrated to the Blessed Ivan Merz is not in Croatia or in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in Italy, on the former battlefield during World War I in the Dolomites where Ivan Merz stayed on the other side of the frontline. On Monte Lefre, at an altitude of 1300 m, in the village of Villa Agnedo near Trento the local Bishop Luigi Bressan on 19 September 2004 blessed the picture of the Bl. Ivan Merz and the newly built chapel dedicated to the Croatian Blessed. Numerous volunteers participated in the construction of the chapel, especially the Italian "alpini". So how did this project come to be realized? The greatest merit for the building of the chapel and its consecration to the Bl. Merz goes to the parish priest from Trento, don Lucio Tomaselli, from Villa Agnedo by birth. This is how Don Lucio explains it: "In Prnjavor and surroundings many Italians were living, coming from the surroundings of Trento, who moved to Bosnia by the end of the 19th century. When the last war began in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they came back, unfortunately as refugees, back to the homeland of their grandfathers and brought with them memories of spiritual values of the country in which they have lived until then, among them the memory of the Bl. Ivan Merz. When we started the construction of the chapel on the Lefre mountain, we decided to consecrate it to Ivan Merz because it was precisely in these mountains that the Blessed Merz in the time of war through the experience of suffering underwent his deep conversion to God and the beginnings of his ascent towards sanctity." On the occasion of the consecration Don Lucio prepared a brochure in Italian language with texts from the Bl. Ivan Merz's war diary. So, the area on the former battlefield, where the Bl. Ivan Merz through the sufferings and distress of war began his ascent toward God and sanctity with this chapel gained a deserving mark.



The Bishop of Trento Msgr. Luigi Bressan blesses the picture and chapel dedicated to the Bl. Ivan Merz



Italian worshippers at the blessing of the chapel.

CONTINUATION OF STUDIES IN VIENNA 1919 – 1920

Return to Vienna, enrolment at the faculty, residence

After having fulfilled his duty and consolidated the affairs among the miners in Maslovare, Ivan asked Kostić, the Chairman of the National Council in Banja Luka, an Orthodox priest, to relieve him of the duty of commander of the coal mine, in order to continue his studies. He got this permission and in January 1919, along with other Croatian students, he once more went to Vienna.

His firstly stayed with other colleagues in a Catholic Institute *Augustineum* where students of different nationalities were staying, and the head of the dorm was a Slovenian priest, Dr. Josip Ujčić.³⁶³ After a certain period of time, Ivan relocated to his former landlords. At the University, he enrolled in the courses of German and French languages and literature. He diligently read all the works necessary for the studies and was a frequent visitor of the *Burgtheater*, *Staatsoper* and *Volkstheater*. Abundant notes on all this are found in the Diary.

Relocation of the family to Zagreb

Easter and summer holidays of 1919 Ivan spent in Banja Luka, and in September that same year his parents moved to Zagreb, where his father got a job as supervisor of the state railways. They got an apartment in *Starčevićev dom* (present-day Starčević Square 6), across from the Main Railway Station. This is where Ivan lived, upon return from his studies, until his death.

Intensive spiritual life

During his stay in Vienna, along with diligent efforts needed for the studies, he dedicated himself to the deepening of his religious life and apostolic activity, especially in the Academic Society “Croatia”, as is visible from his Diary. He was a keen observer of Catholic life in Vienna, as well as in Zagreb.

His connection with God at that time was marked by a devotion to the Heart of Jesus and the liturgy. He renewed the devotion of the nine First Fridays and this is what he noted: “I received my ninth Holy Communion dedicated to the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and I believe that I will contemplate the depths of the most holy Trinity. I must earn here somehow that immeasurable love of Christ, and I will strive, with God’s help, to continue the task of sanctity with a growing zeal.”³⁶⁴

For his later spiritual life, as well as apostolate, the decisive breakthrough was liturgical spiritual exercises in the monastery St. Gabriel near Mödling, where a large missionary school was kept. This was during the Holy Week of 1920. It was here that Ivan got to know and was filled with enthusiasm for the liturgy of the Catholic Church from which he will later draw inspiration and strength for his inner life. Following his coming to Zagreb, he became a great promoter of the liturgical renewal among the Croatian people.

Renewal of the Catholic Academic Society “Croatia” in Vienna

With the arrival in Vienna, Ivan, along with three student colleagues immediately renewed the Academic Society “Croatia” which was inactive during the war. Along with

³⁶³ Dr. Josip UJČIĆ (1880–1964), Croatian priest from Istria. Following his service in Vienna, became university professor in Ljubljana and finally the Archbishop in Belgrade.

³⁶⁴ *Diary*, 6 September 1919

Merz, the renovators of the Society were Dragan Marošević, Avelin Čepulić and Mato Filipović, SJ. The rooms in Merz's apartment were the premises in which Ivan and his colleagues from the "Croatia" Society regularly met. Soon, two worthy Croatian Franciscans joined them. As the Society's secretary, Ivan tirelessly followed all public lectures about the Catholic culture, organizations and informed his comrades about them.

In the meetings, Ivan insisted on the importance of spiritual life. He particularly stressed this point in his lecture *The New Age* which he gave to his colleagues in February 1919, and which made a strong impact on all listeners.³⁶⁵ In this lecture, Ivan described the turnabout and yearnings of his life and laid down the goals of a modern Catholicism.

Due to new circumstances that came about with the founding of the new Yugoslav state, the "Croatia" Society changed its name to *Jug* (South) and accepted Slovenian students into its ranks.

Participates in the work of various societies and on Catholic manifestations

Apart from "Croatia" Society, where he served as secretary (Avelin Čepulić was president), Ivan was also a member of the academic Marian Congregation which promoted a deeper spiritual life. This he mentions in his Diary where he gives summaries of the lectures he heard there.

A significant influence on Merz's life was exerted by the academic society *Logos*, where Ivan was among the ten founding members! This society had the task to study religious issues and inner life. Subsequently it grew and advanced considerably. On the Annunciation day, 25 March 1920, Ivan was present at the Catholic Congress of the Vienna Archdiocese. He was especially impressed by the thoughts relating to the universal Catholic consciousness and he published an article about it in Croatian press.³⁶⁶

At the beginning of August 1920, Ivan took part at a great meeting of the Eagle Catholic Organization in Maribor, and on this occasion held a lecture about the International Catholic Students Union. "I spoke with passion, given to me by the holy Eucharist" he stated in his Diary, after the description of the Maribor gathering.³⁶⁷ During his stay in Banja Luka during the summer vacation in 1919, Ivan helped found a society for the youth and vacation courses.³⁶⁸ Already at that time in Vienna, Ivan's Catholicism was not colored by culture, politics, social issues, or even esthetics, but was a Catholicism of Christ and the soul, a Catholicism of eternal values which encompass the entire person and hold everything else subordinate from the perspective of eternity.

Contributes to the resolution of problems in the Croatian Catholic Movement

Together with his colleagues, Ivan keenly followed the development of the Croatian Catholic Movement in his homeland, the umbrella movement to which, through the "Croatia" Society, he also belonged. He noticed certain irregularities in the Movement, a leaning toward excessive nationalism and a danger of a split within the Movement. He discussed these matters a lot with his colleagues, and on one occasion he presented his views in the form of a lecture. The motive of this discussion and Ivan's reaction was the *Luč* Magazine in which the ideas were put forth which alarmed Ivan and his colleagues. The original manuscript of his lecture is lost, but Dr. D. Kniewald published it in Ivan's first biography.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Dr. Avelin ČEPULIĆ, *From the Student Days of Dr. Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Orlovska misao, June 1928, No. 9, pp. 130–134.

³⁶⁶ Religious Renewal of Austrian Catholics (in Cro.), *Narodna politika*, Zagreb, No. 48, 17 April 1920, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ *Diary*, 3 August 1920.

³⁶⁸ *Diary*, 28 August 1919.

³⁶⁹ D. KNIEWALD, *Dr. Ivan Merz – Life and Activity (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 1932, pp. 108–109. Due to a great importance of the thoughts expressed there, we printed this lecture in the text of the Diary where it chronologically belongs.

Resistance to the Serbian terror in Vienna

In his Viennese Diary of 12 June 1919, Merz gives us this interesting note: “Yesterday in the canteen, the Serbs approached us with terror (Kostić, Dr. Jakšić, Adamović). They wanted us to make a vow of allegiance to the Serbian dynasty, central government and a unified people.” There is no mention on how the events evolved further.

However, Dr. D. Kniewald in Ivan’s biography gives us a broader context of the whole incident³⁷⁰, taken over from an article by Dr. Avelin Čepulić who was a witness of this event. Namely, already in the first months after the founding of the new Yugoslav State, the Belgrade regime, through its envoys began openly or secretly persecuting all that was Croatian and Catholic, both within the country and abroad. In the Vienna case, Merz decisively resisted this Serbian terror, as he calls it himself, and with his example encouraged other Croatian students who followed suit. Below is the full description of the incident as it was described by Dr. Avelin Čepulić, the witness:

“In its peaceful social work the “Croatia” Society was shaken by some unpleasant events which threatened our very existence (economic survival). Namely, in Vienna there was the so-called “Yugoslav canteen” for the students from our state, about a hundred of them. Here a group of students, Yugoslav nationalists (the ORJUNA Organization)³⁷¹ took lead. For them the “Croatia” Society was a thorn in the flesh, especially due to its decisive influence and reputation among a greater part of Croatian students who suffered the Yugoslav and ORJUNA domination in the canteen with pain. In order for the ORJUNA group to get rid of the Croats, and their key opponent, the “Croatia” Society, they made a malicious plan. They decided that access to the canteen could be had only by those students who signed some political statement, injurious for the Croatian people.³⁷² Refusal to sign this statement meant exclusion from the canteen! And at that time in Vienna the canteen was the only place where students could get food. And this is what happened: all the Croatian liberals and “great” Croats, whether the followers of Starčević, republicans, etc. signed humbly, without a word of protest this anti-Croatian statement. But then, the turn came for the hardest nut – the “Croatia” Society. They first invited Merz to sign the statement. “I am not signing!” the Orjuna Group was petrified. They never imagined that there could be a man whom they couldn’t break. They immediately convened an extraordinary meeting and removed Merz from the canteen. We, other members of the “Croatia” Society, took a different, somewhat easier road. We won for our cause the diplomatic envoy of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Vienna and he had to intervene. Due to his intervention, the Orjuna Group convened an assembly of all the Viennese students from our country and in this assembly, Merz’s unbreakable character made such a deep impression on all, including many liberals, so that we, the members of the “Croatia” Society, got the necessary majority and toppled the Orjuna from the helm.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ D. KNIEWALD, *Dr. Ivan Merz – Life and Activity (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 1932, p. 110.

³⁷¹ ORJUNA is an acronym for the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists. Orjuna was formally founded in Split, following the establishment of the new state - The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was founded by a group of young followers of the politician Svetozar Pribičević (at that time a hardline Serbian nationalist). The goals of Orjuna were a battle against communism and the Croatian national movement, as these were the forces that threatened the new state. The central ideological concept of Orjuna was a unitary Yugoslav nation, along with favoring of the Serbian national mentality. In the Orjuna perspective, Croatian national identity was unfit for the formation of a unitary Yugoslav nation.

³⁷² This is a statement of full submission "to the dynasty, central government and a united nation". See *Diary of I. Merz* of 12 June 1919.

³⁷³ Dr. Avelin ČEPULIĆ, *From the school days of Dr. Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Orlovska misao, Zagreb, June 1929, No. 9, pp. 130–134.



View of Vienna

DIARY

17 February 1919 - 14 October 1920

Vienna, 17 February 1919 – (22 years and 2 months)

Review, critique and comment on Pestalozzi's novel Leonard and Gertrude

This is a pedagogical novel in which we see a reflection of the misery of a part of the Swiss-German people. At a time in which the science and culture are at such a high level, the lower strata of the population live in darkness and evil. This part of Europe is worse than wild, uncultivated regions, because these people steered away from nature and degenerated. Pestalozzi lived among these people and he takes us into every hut, tavern, barber's shop, introduces us to every priest and local potentate. He shows us in detail the degeneration of this village and indirectly points out the way in which this evil might be healed. This is the purpose of his work, as he was a practicing social worker and his main goal was to correct the people with this work. That's why it is written in a plain style, so that everybody can understand it. (...)

(Here follows a detailed account of the content of the novel and writer's guidelines how this social evil can be corrected: to improve education within the family, rulers must take care of the people like fathers, and the priest must be a medicine for the soul whose task is to instill a religion of the heart)

Vienna, 17 March 1919 – (22 years and 3 months)

Attends a workers' theatre play with a Christian content

I learn and go into various organizations... Those around the *Gral*³⁷⁴ established a *Christlich-deutsche Volksbühne* and yesterday was their first performance: *Der Abt von Fiecht*. (On this occasion, I saw Kralik.) Male and female workers were actors and they played very well, with enthusiasm and the whole impression was very pleasant. In our country, it wouldn't be a problem to create something like that and thus raise the self-awareness of the workers.

(Here follows a brief account of the content of the drama which is permeated with a Christian spirit. A soldier who fought against the Turks gets married. In the meantime, the

³⁷⁴ *Gral* – A German monthly magazine for Catholic literature and Christian world-view. Published between 1905 and 1937. At the advice of Dr. Maraković, Merz read it while still in Banja Luka.

Turks break into his town and he believes that his wife and daughter perished. He abandons the world and dedicates himself to God by building a monastery. In the meantime, he finds out that his wife and daughter survived the Turkish occupation. A complicated plot follows...)

Vienna, 31 March 1919 – (22 years and 3 months)

Serbian Freemasons against Croatian Catholicism

The Serbs have a strong Freemasonic organization. Their entire life, starting with Peter to the lowest person is in the service of Freemasons. Somebody, on the basis of documents brought out into the open things that shocked us. Were we all asleep and failed to notice what was going on around us? The only hope of the Church in Croatia, our Student Movement, has split into two, *Hrvatska straža* and *Dan* magazines are not published any more... Is this merely by accident? Or the torch of dissent was intentionally thrown into our ranks? In addition, we see centrifugal tendencies among the priests (Bosnian Franciscans). All the enemy press is in the hands of Freemasons. It is at the last moment that we organize ourselves and accept the battle. Christianity as a common denominator of Serbs and Croats for the moment seems a utopia, because the Freemasons are supporting Orthodoxy in the elements in which it differs from Catholicism. I don't know if it will be possible to organize a part of Serbian Christian intelligentsia so that we jointly commence work on the resurrection of the Christian culture. But woe, I hold that it is too late; I wonder if one could find among the entire Serbian intelligentsia even a single one who is not imbued by liberalism.

May our dear Jesus help us to overcome Satan in ourselves and to love our Creator and our neighbor so that we may glorify and expand the most holy Church!

Vienna, 31 March 1919 – (22 years and 3 months)

Catholicism is our goal, not the means!

Already during the war, and especially during the study in Vienna, Ivan monitored with a keen eye the development of the Croatian Catholic Movement in his homeland. He noticed certain irregularities within the Movement, especially after Petar Rogulja published in Luč Magazine in 1916 his article "Before the Dawn" which provoked numerous debates and there was a danger that the Movement might split. Ivan discussed this matter at length with his colleagues, and on one meeting he openly declared his views in the form of a lecture. Here we bring the key thoughts from this lecture whose original manuscript is not preserved, but Dr. D. Kniewald published it in Ivan's first biography.³⁷⁵ Although this text is not part of the Diary, we print it here because it rounds off the picture of his spirituality, his intellectual profile, his inner world and gives us a clear picture of his deep religious convictions, views and proposals how to preserve faith in everyday life of engaged Catholics.

"Brothers! We can't go on like this. Our movement is being divided and is going down the wrong track. Religion became the means of nationalism. We shall not and mustn't be Catholics in order to help the people, but will help the people because we are Catholics. Catholicism is our aim, not our means. One part of our generation in this war-time and political turmoil completely forgot the purpose of our lives and neglected the cultivation of ourselves while other brothers were on the battlefields, imprisoned or in hospitals. In those moments of suffering they were exclusively occupied by the cultivation of their souls. Thus, the circumstances created two parallel generations, the nationalistic-

³⁷⁵ D. KNIEWALD, *Dr. Ivan Merz – life and work*, (in Croatian) Zagreb, 1932, pp. 108–109.

intellectual and the religious type. Both must now merge, but the leadership must be had by the *latter* type.

The basis of our life must be our regeneration in Christ, and everything else follows logically from this. But alas, how far we are from this! A part of our movement is permeated with the spirit of modernity and decadence. Leadership is in the hands of people incapable of carrying out this task. Instead of sowing everywhere the seeds of love in the spirit of Christ, to put balm even on the wounds of the enemy, what's more, they attack with a liberal gesture all that was dear to us, even if it wasn't perfect.

The only hope of Catholicism in our people is the Students' Movement. This is our child and our greatest hope. The province, which elaborates all ideas more slowly, preserved something of the old idealism of the Movement, which was one of the most beautiful features in the cultural history of the Croatian people. Is there anyone here who forgot the joy when *Luč* came out? Is there anyone who doesn't remember with pain and tears our "poet of eternal pen" or Roman Tieck, "the artist of the most holy Eucharist"? Where are these people today who would strive for *inner* greatness, for the perfection of themselves, who resolved life's most difficult problems in a unique way and paved the way to a culture in its own right? The ties are broken, the gap is enormous. Our current ideology is a liberal decadence. The poets in *Luč* are tiny epigones of Verlaine and Baudelaire...Our poetry will never be great unless we reform the center of all life – the man. We ought to return to the faith in a radical way, it must permeate our whole life. The thought that we are allowed to do everything that doesn't collide with a Catholic morale is unworthy of our mission. We must all be convinced that the founders of our Movement accomplished such beautiful successes because they were radical Catholics. A great part of our people (today) are in the Movement only because they are convinced that they will evolve favorably in *this* world. But, this is a poor religion; we are the members of the mystical Body of Christ and we know only one gravitational center and only one single life.

In order to bridge the gap which occurred between our old generation, which still has many worthy members, and the new one, we ought to transform the *Luč* magazine. As it is now, it is a bad epigone of modern decadence. Art is the best representative of the age and people and these two directions (Tieck and newer poets in *Luč*) clearly show that the connection between the old and the new generation is severed. It is like that in all other fields of life. The sense of Christian greatness has been forgotten amongst us..."

It was concluded that the opinion of "Croatia" Society about some issues which concern the *Luč* Magazine be sent to the editors. And really, in *Luč* No. 9, 1918/19, p. 246, in the same issue in which Ivan's article *The New Age* was printed, the letter from the Viennese "Croatia" Society was printed too with proposals for the reform of *Luč* according to the ideas which Merz highlighted in his lecture.

Vienna, 2 April 1919 – (22 years and 4 months)

Review of the content and critique of Hebbel's tragedy Mary Magdalene from 1844

This is an urban tragedy which carries all the features of Hebbel's heroic tragedies and which by all means influenced Ibsen. The main protagonist, Klara is one of many Hebbel's women who have a deep notion of female dignity, a notion which we, the world of today, cannot comprehend. Admittedly, this notion of female dignity he didn't develop to the full; the work largely covers a real milieu and Hebbel keeps his moralizing tendency at the bottom of his soul. (...) Observed from the natural point of view, this work is an apology of virginity and love towards the father, two values which are embedded in the human soul by nature. (...)

(Here follows an extensive account of the content of the work and analysis of his characters.)

Vienna, 4 May 1919 – (22 years and 5 months)

Watched the drama Florian Geyer by G. Hauptmann

This is a drama without any action at all. It represents an epic event with modern naturalist technique. It all takes place during the peasant uprising in Luther's time. I was in the theatre with Štitić.

Vienna, 12 June 1919 – (22 years and 6 months)

Serbian terror in Vienna

I am learning Gothic and Old German. Yesterday in the canteen the Serbs approached us with terror (Kostić, Dr. Jakšić, Adamović). They want us to pledge allegiance to the dynasty, central government and a unified nation.³⁷⁶

I read *Othello* and listened to *Aida*.

Vienna, 13 June 1919 – (22 years and 6 months)

Review and critique of Verdi's opera Aida

It cannot be compared to Wagner. Music is not an integral whole with ideas of the work; there is no psychological action and different instruments don't have their distinct role. (...) All the time I was looking for Wagner in Verdi, and I mostly listened to the orchestra. There are some beautiful melodies: the march of the victorious and the funeral song. The content is terribly shallow. (...) In a literary way, that shallow spiritual world-view is reflected, although the motif (Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde) is by itself magnificent. It is romantic, but doesn't suit our age because it has no psychological motivation. Such love which is a deity unto itself and is not ennobled in any way is a psychological absurdity. For us who know what marriage means, this pagan immature love is immature in the same way in which we all know that the former slave trade was immoral.

(Here follows the account of the opera's content)



St. Stephen's cathedral in Vienna

³⁷⁶ See ORJUNA in the introductory part of the Viennese Diary . Note No.: 9

Vienna, Sunday, 1 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Attends lectures at the Marian Congregation

Fr. Leifert spoke in the Marian Congregation³⁷⁷ about sacrifice; all the nations had it; sacrifice is gradual, it grows in geometrical progression: animal – robber – child – young man and all of this cannot destroy the immeasurable offence. Only if the sacrifice is immeasurable, the immeasurable offence can be expiated. In all world-views this tendency is present and already the old philosophers were asking themselves where does it come from. Plato answers them that it is based on old traditions. He goes on to the liturgy. If the scientists would discover on some island a tribe which preserved the costume, customs, language for two thousand years, people wouldn't believe it. And in liturgy this is preserved. He mentions Luther's revolution which finds it impossible to believe in a God who is sacrificed every day for our mistakes, but claims that he suffered this sacrifice only once; he mentions Calvin and Jansen and sheds light on the mystery of the holy Mass.

A meeting of all the Marian Congregations in *Konzerthaus*: Dreisekolinden sings. They speak about charity work, about the apostolate, director Smit reports on the activity of the *Volksbund*. They explain socialism as a pseudo-religion, a heresy against which they will fight successfully.

Pavešić and Poljaković brought the food for the canteen.

Vienna, 15 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Visit to the Jesuit monastery in Kalksburg, political situation in Russia

In Kalksburg we visited a Jesuit monastery. It is ideally ordered; an island of peace and contentment.

The Bolsheviks wanted to proclaim the Soviet Republic. They say there are many wounded.

I learn Old German. I make mistakes...³⁷⁸

Vienna, 17 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)³⁷⁹

Visit to a theatre

I saw *Waves of the Sea and of Love* by Grillparzer. It's a soul drama, technically the end is pretty disjointed, and it contains several deep tragic moments which remind me of Vigny's *I love the majesty of human suffering*.

Vienna, 20 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Review and critique of Mozart's opera Don Juan

I am coming from Mozart's *Don Juan*. The content reminds me of the novels from the beginning of the 19th century which describe sin interestingly and in great detail, and in the end, they conclude morally. *Don Juan*, a well-known character from world

³⁷⁷ MARIAN CONGREGATION – a Catholic association for the cultivation of spiritual life among the lay faithful of all ages. It was founded by the Jesuits at the very beginning of the foundation of their order. This model of promoting spiritual life spread through the entire Christian world. After the Second Vatican Council, the name was changed so that these associations today are called *Communities of Christian Life*.

³⁷⁸ This is the end of the 15th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 23 November 1918 until 15 July 1919.

³⁷⁹ This is the beginning of the 16th notebook of the Bl. Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 17 July 1919 until 6 February 1920.

literature, a man without conscience who deceives and charms the girls... The text doesn't match the musical composition by far.

(Here follows a brief review of the content of the opera)

Vienna, 25 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

American charitable initiative for the students after the war

Americans are giving us for 30 crowns a day chocolate coffee with a white bread roll (Semmel). It is as if some religious spirit lies behind this gesture and generally behind this organized mercy. This behavior is like a balm for the old world torn apart by hatred.

Criticizes antisemitism of some Christians

I hold that the Christians behave in an un-Christian manner toward the Jews. It is as if they don't understand the tragic fate of this poor nation that was predestined to have this magnificent past and to give birth to the Messiah; and now, it wanders as if under a curse, despised without a king and priests in foreign lands. I think Christians ought to show more mercy toward this interesting people, not only due to historical reverence but because some of them will convert at the end of the world. The grandfathers of these future converts are among us, and we persecute them. We ought to have more understanding and love toward this people and in such a way we will attract many into the embrace of our holy Church. We must be especially sensitive towards Jews who are suffering, and there are many today, so instead of opting for Bolshevism, they will come to us. The rich man and capitalism of any religion was and is our opponent.

Scheeben writes wonderfully.³⁸⁰

Banja Luka, 27 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Apostolic work with the youth in Banja Luka

We established holiday courses.³⁸¹ The article *The New Age* appeared recently in *Luč Magazine* (Year XIV, No. 9–10, pp. 210–214).³⁸² I am learning the whole day long.

Banja Luka, 29 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Arrogance – the characteristic of reformation and the mother of chauvinism

I am reading German poets from the 16th century. The flood of reformation has taken over the spirits; all the poetry is in its service. They debate the Church truths, but there are a lot of healthy things in this movement. It was necessary in order to regenerate old and worn-out representatives of the Church. But, arrogance is a trait of this movement and it is interesting to read Fischart and others who completely forgot the Christian community, holding national egoism above all. Reformation is the mother of national

³⁸⁰ Matthias Joseph SCHEEBEN (1835–1888) was a theological writer well known in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. While in the Military Academy (1914) Merz read his book *The Art of Prayer* (in German) which he liked very much and about which he made notes in his Diary. This book was recommended to him by his teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković. It is evident from this entry that even after the war Merz continued reading his works, but this time there is no mention of the work he was reading.

³⁸¹ Holiday courses were summer gatherings for the youth with a cultural, religious and recreational character, organized by the members of the Croatian Catholic Movement.

³⁸² The article *The New Age* (in Croatian) is Ivan Merz's first published work. Here he summarized the experiences he went through on the battlefield in World War I. The article was written as early as the beginning of 1917. Merz presented in full the content of this article as a lecture which he held in the *Croatia Academic Society* in Vienna in the spring of 1919. His colleagues that were listening remained under a deep impression of his powerful thoughts. The article *The New Age* was published again in the 2nd volume of his *Collected Works*, Zagreb, 2011, pp 17–22.

chauvinism; it “liberated” the spirits under the “yoke” of Roman universalism and created a national ideal which brought so much misfortune to the centuries that followed.

(In the continuation Merz quotes in German from Fischart’s poem which is imbued by pan-Germanic spirit, in which Germany is called “domitrix gentium”, i.e. the one which subjugates the nations and which contains very ugly references about the French)

Banja Luka, 31 July 1919 – (22 years and 7 months)

Luther is a very interesting personality. I quote from his letter that he wrote to his wife on 25 January 1546:

“It’s not that we were thirsty to drink (the river Saale), but we took good Rhine wine and beer with which we fortified ourselves and took solace until the river Saale stopped being angry at us. Because the devil is angry at us and resides in the water (The Saale flooded everything). It is better to keep safe than complain later, and it is not necessary to give the Pope and his entourage the insane joy (that I wanted to cross The Saale in spite of the flood).”

He is interesting and rather conceited, although a great spirit who clearly saw many mistakes of his people:

“Every nation must have its own devil, Switzerland hers, France hers; our German devil is becoming a good wine belly and must be called drunkenness, because he is so thirsty and cheerful that he cannot be cooled with such quantities of wine and beer. And such eternal thirst will remain the German torture (it scares me) until the Judgement Day” (Görchen 7, p. 95)³⁸³

Banja Luka, 3 August 1919 – (22 years and 8 months)

Compares literature of Catholic countries with Protestant Germany where it is practically non-existent

It is interesting to follow the development of German literature, the luxuriant works of the epic writer Wolfram, a deep lyric of Walther von der Vogelweide, the brilliant prose of the mystic Seuse, Mechtilda; then comes the reformation and a gap occurs. Are you seeking strong and deep values? All you will find is debate, national chauvinist brutality straining to the extreme. Hans Sachs draws his last strength from the Catholic tradition, whereas Fischart and all who follow don’t know poetry any more.

A void opened up overnight, at a time when in Italy the classics created universal works of art, in France and Spain the arts blossomed, in England the popular Catholic traditions led to Shakespeare and in Protestant Germany there is nothing.

Although some works of value do occur, this is only due to motivation from neighboring, mainly Catholic countries. This is a terrible national tragedy. And what follows afterwards?! I will think about it the next time.

And what is the situation in our country? Dubrovnik literature is great – it is Catholic. Serbs don’t have it. Reflecting on more recent times, they are too close to identify objectively permanent values. But, I am convinced that from a multitude of works some will crystallize which will sprout from the soil of Catholicism.

³⁸³ These Luther's texts Merz quotes in German.

Banja Luka, 5 August 1919 – (22 years and 8 months)

Enthusiastic about the great names of Catholic faith, worried for the Church in his homeland

Oh, the study of literary history is hugely interesting. In the literary desert of the 17th century, among rough or refined formalists, among soul-less or bombastic dramatists, among idyllically beatified plump creatures (P. Gerhard), there rises the majestic appearance of the Jesuit Friedrich Spee, who in his work *Cautio criminalis* fights against the burning of witches, sings brilliantly and full of spirit about the betrothal of the soul and dies from a contagious disease while tending the wounded soldiers. I am overcome with enthusiasm for our holy faith which in desperate times gives birth to super-humans: St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and others. I trust in God that even now such people will appear when the Church is shaken and threatened by collapse in our country. The movement against the celibate, against clerical discipline, the action of Freemasonic “reformers” to assist rebellious priests, all of these are the omens of an enormous cultural war in our homeland.

We ought to pray to the dear God to give us great people!³⁸⁴

Banja Luka, 21 August 1919 – (22 years and 8 months)

Review and analysis of the novel Simplicissimus by H. J. Ch. von Grimmelshausen

A very good novel and a consolation that it sprouted in the desert of Protestant literature. I don't know of any older novel by a convert. The author crossed over to Catholicism and this deep ethical understanding permeates the entire work... The main protagonist Simplicius after many adventures during his life becomes a hermit, writes his experiences and is thankful from the bottom of his soul that God gave him the Grace of conversion. (...)

(In the continuation, there follows a review of the content of the novel and a judgement of its characters)

Banja Luka, 28 August 1919 – (22 years and 8 months)

Active in the founding of Catholic societies for the youth

In recent times, we founded a Youth Association and injected life into the High School Organization. We would have liked to set up a female organization, but the bishop forbade it, not wanting men to hold lectures for girls. We turned to the Zagreb Catholic Seniorate to help us in this matter.

Zagreb, 6 September 1919 – (22 years and 9 months)

Transfer to Zagreb, regrets leaving Bosnia, completed the Great Novena in the honor of the Heart of Jesus

We were transferred here. I regret leaving Bosnia and the people there. It will be hard for me to adapt to this mentality. Over there, the people have stronger characters; these here seem colorless and slack. French officers and soldiers! What a difference between the blonde Germans, their tall, muscular officers, well-trained soldiers.

³⁸⁴ When Merz was writing this text and the last sentence, he didn't have an inkling that God predestined him to become one of these great people. Five years after his death, Dr. Č. Čekada in the Sarajevo *Catholic Weekly* (in Croatian) wrote this sentence: "Ivan Merz never put on a cassock, but he was a pillar of the Church of God" (Čedomil Čekada, "Our saint in a tailcoat", *Katolički tjednik (Catholic Weekly)*, No. 19, Sarajevo, 7 May 1933, No. 7, p. 4)

Yesterday was the most important day in my life. I completed the ninth Holy Communion in honor of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and I believe that I will contemplate the depths of the Most Holy Trinity. I must at least in some way deserve this immeasurable love of Christ in this life, so with God's help I will try to continue the work of my own sanctification with greater force.

Zagreb, 1 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Review and analysis of Novalis's novel Heinrich von Ofterdingen

This novel surprised me. I hoped that in it I would find a well-built, precise philosophy of life; whereas, what I found was a reverie of a lyric, poetic soul who judges history and great epochs in history without having glimpsed at life itself. In spite of great ideas, brilliant imagination, the novel doesn't satisfy in the least. (...) One can perceive the great talent which Novalis has, but he is terribly lacking in experience. When a poet develops, two forces ought to exert an influence on him: pain and sin. He must enter into battle with them, overcome them and then create a poetic orientation with regard to these two ideas (Dante). (...)

(In continuation, there follows a retelling of the content of the novel and a critique of its characters)

Vienna, 9 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Review and analysis of the novel Lucinde by Fr. Schlegel

This is no novel. It has almost no content. Irony has destroyed every form. We come to the start only after several chapters. The idea is free love. It is an apology for individuals who create morals for themselves. (...) Therefore, the work has also a lascivious character. Fr. Schlegel wanted to resolve the meaning of love in a romantic way, something which was much debated and written about in his time (Schleiermacher). He only partially succeeded. (...)

(Here follows a short account of the content of the work and critique of its idea and characters)

Vienna, 10 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Human love is an image of the love between Christ and the Church

Romantic letters are interesting, especially the letters by Dorothea Veith and Karolina Böhmer Schlegel. One can study the essence of love from them. In their female souls, the image of the lover is projected. They live in the ideas of their lovers, think and conclude like them. He lifts them to his level and sees his product in their souls, sees himself. These letters confirm to me the teaching of the Church which says that marriage (love) is the relationship between Christ and the soul (Church). Christ projects by means of Grace his nature into the human soul, lifts her to his level, permeates her with his image, is reflected in her and loves her immeasurably.

Vienna, 12 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Christianity returns dignity to three classes: women, children and workers. The importance of Catholic organizations for children

In pagan times, these three classes were without any rights: women, children and workers. Demosthenes had a bad opinion of women, she was despised if she couldn't give birth, in Rome they threw women into the Tiber River. It was similarly with children. Mothers often threw their children to the dogs. The workers were slaves. Cicero mentions

that it is a shame to linger in a workshop. The Mother of God, the little Jesus and St. Joseph – the divine family (think of Raphael!) – isn't it an allegory of the social renewal in Christianity and the liberation of the woman (Mary), child (Jesus) and worker (Joseph). History knows great social movements, for women and workers, and we are going through them; the movement for children is, admittedly, still to come. The Little Perica, the Little Haly of "the holy God", children's organizations of Guardian Angels all herald a children's revolution. Psychologically it seems absurd that children lead social movements, but it happens. The child today is in a miserable situation; similar to the situation in which women were before. Some parents love their children with an animal love, and others neglect them completely so that masses of children live in total misery. Children, organize yourselves! When in a hundred or a thousand years a great children's movement will be born as a product of extreme material necessity and which will, naturally, be led by the liberals, they will use this omission on the part of the Church by putting blame on her; they will not think of the divine prophecy which the Almighty has given us allegorically and factually in the Holy Family, they will not think that Christianity is the birthplace of the children's movement, that at a time when there was no hint of such a movement the sanctity of children's souls from the beginning of the world until its end was adored in the image of the Child. Catholics should begin with organizing children!

Vienna, 14 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Review and critique of the novel Siebenkäs by Jean Paul

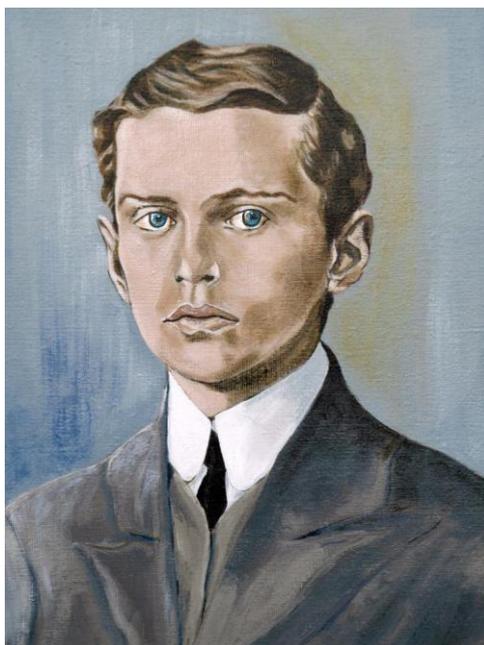
I began reading the novel *Siebenkäs*. I couldn't end it. It is hugely extensive, with terrible digressions, and the action is not moving forward. This is a bad Jean Paul, a formal ignorant, extensive to the extreme. It portrays tiny people who are happy with their small horizons. (...) The motif is the life of a provincial student, who happily completes his studies, gets married and finally dies.

(Here follows a brief review of the content of the novel)

Getting to know people and their characters, differentiates the exterior and the interior

Why is it more interesting to discuss in the dark? Why can one get to know a person better from intimate correspondence than from a conversation? Why shall we have a greater impact on people and why shall we get to know them better if we don't observe too much the outer appearance (face, body, etc.)? Because, for instance, looking at a face we observe a man as he really is. In the face his mainly good and bad nature are crystallized. It is a reflection of the momentary spiritual greatness of a man. In a conversation, we match unconsciously the speech of this person with different movements of his body (face). If we listen to the same man in darkness, supposing we never even saw him, and if we enter into an idealistic conversation, we will grow to like this man, and the other way around. We will get to know his good nature and we will connect our deliberation to this nature, we will catch his sympathy and our action will be favorable. In letters too, good nature comes out because a man instinctively hides his mistakes in front of others, and we will get to know his good tendencies. The best way, therefore, to win a man for a cause...

Priests are advised not to look too much at people; in such a way, they will pay less attention to the exterior and the good nature of the persons they are dealing with will remain etched in their memory. In such a way, they will win over the people reacting to the good which they unwittingly observe in this person. In speech, like in a letter, the bad nature is also revealed, only this is not easily observable, because looking at another we see that the face matches the words. Not to look too much at people is a good means of asceticism; to emancipate ourselves from curiosity to which we are slaves!



Ivan Merz – student in Vienna. Painting by General Ante Gotovina in The Hague in 2009

Vienna, 16 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Review of the content and critique of the work Puss in Boots by Ludwig Tieck

Vienna, 30 October 1919 – (22 years and 10 months)

Review of the epic Savonarola by N. Lenau, comparison with St. Francis

Some kind of epic poem like the *Croatian Kings*. Romances are strung one beside the other, each a picture and a whole for itself. The work has a lyric character; religious battles which the authors present are something he has been through himself. (...) I don't know enough history in order to be able to judge how much he sticks to the truth, but I can say that Savonarola was not, as Lenau presented him, a hero of Christianity, a saint. In several places, we have intimations of his spiritual battles, but this is not sufficiently elaborated. From this point of view, the work is a fragment.

Savonarola was a Protestant, Luther's predecessor; for a Catholic reformer, the motif is the most holy Eucharist and in this work one feels the author's terrible coldness. When Savonarola after a sermon turns to God for a blessing, we instinctively feel that he will turn toward the tabernacle. (...)

Lenau projected his feelings, the feelings of a lay protestant (even if he calls himself Catholic) into Savonarola's soul. In his eyes, he is a great man, while in the eyes of a Catholic the real reformer is St. Francis who organized and built and thus fought decay. In today's social century everyone acknowledges that the work of Savonarola, which consisted in negative criticisms, was not positive. This has always been the viewpoint of the Church, and the most recent events steered in that direction the liberals to whom, naturally, as far back as eighty years ago, the energetic and manly tone of Savonarola was more amiable than the positive revolutionary mission of St. Francis. Everything shows us that the Church is the only compass for the judgement of life and everything that proceeds from this. (...)

(Here follows an extensive retelling of the content of the epic and its analysis and critique of the characters, along with several quotations)

Vienna, 2 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the drama The Ancestress by Franz Grillparzer

The motif of the work is: a murderer kills himself. Crime is the death sentence for the perpetrator. The work is a national romantic tragedy of fate. There is something fatalistic in it – hereditary elements. Father a killer, brother a weirdo, son a killer who commits suicide. The idea is ethical compensation.

(Here follows an extensive review of the content and analysis of the drama according to the following criteria: motif, general character, idea, realistic background, vesture, etc.)

Vienna, 4 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the poem Field Flowers by Adalbert Stifter

Motif: ideal love towards a girl which (love), due to prejudices of the lovers, almost comes to grief, but thanks to the initiative of mediators ends up happily. The work is a pearl of German poetry. Everything is permeated with a wonderful atmosphere. Only, one feels that this is the work of a German who didn't pass through the formal school of the French. Therefore, some descriptions are too extensive and the characters are too pale. The work lacks the succinctness and clarity of Turgenev who created a formally perfect work of art.

(Here follows a lengthy narration of the content of the poem and its characters, as well as an analysis of the work according to the following criteria; characters, detail, vesture, general characteristics, etc.)

Vienna, 9 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review and critique of a cheerful drama The Broken Jug by Heinrich von Kleist

It is not a drama, but a *genre*. We are not interested in the unfolding of the plot because already at the beginning we know how it will end. The characters are well presented, and in their strong realism largely remind one of Molière's characters. (...)

(Here follows a brief account of the content of the drama)

Vienna, 12 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the tragedy The Hereditary Forester by Otto Ludwig

An urban tragedy permeated by a wild, dark power. The characters, especially the Forester, are psychologically elaborated in detail. There is no doubt that this tragedy is an entity unto itself, but if we look at the tragic guilt, it seems that it is founded on rather shaky foundations. The guilt lies in Ulrich's character: a stubbornness which he identifies with morality, honesty. (...) His natural legal feeling tells him that an offence must be followed by revenge. He finds "support" for this in the Bible. Doesn't he know that God did not determine him to punish the crime, but that only He, or the people in His name – never an individual – is allowed to do this?! If we justify this poor knowledge of the Holy Writ, though it is inadmissible with a Protestant, then suicide is also psychologically justified. As he is a killer, he is convinced that he must meet the same fate. Therefore, he executes God's revenge upon himself. All of these tragic acts are closely connected. If we allow one, we must allow the other. The content is, therefore, non-dramatic (it is epic) and the author was forced to invent various motifs and means to transform this epic content into a dramatic one. Ludwig presented the main protagonist, along with all his religious – Protestant milieu as if the God of Christianity didn't exist for him. Leaving God aside, as

well as the Bible and the entire Christianity, and looking upon the work from the viewpoint of a natural morality – of a naked natural man, we see these terrible moves which give such a gloomy feeling to the entire work: a noble and extremely stubborn old man, who loves to argue, does not yield an inch from his convictions. Stubbornness affects the crime. (...) Otto Ludwig extracted it completely from the Christian milieu and placed it in the world of Darwinistic morality. (...)

(Here follows an extensive review of the content and a critical analysis of the work according to literary criteria: exposition, plot, its unfolding)

Vienna, 16 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the drama The 24th of February by Zacharias Werner

An awful fate-tragedy. Werner has a strong dramatic talent; the work is technically very concise, but the idea and motivation are good for nothing. Werner surely wanted to continue Schiller's efforts in terms of fateful tragedy, but in this work, there is no mention of a fate that could be connected to hidden forces in the character of individual persons.

(Here follows a review of the content of the drama and the critique of its author)

Review and critique of a short story Phantasies in the Bremer Ratskeller by Wilhelm Hauff

Thoughts and dreams of the poet on 1st September when the wine demons from folk superstition come to a gathering in a cellar of a German town hall. By family tradition, the poet wishes to slip into his soul to reflect on the past and present. He goes into the cellar of the town hall escorted by a servant, who doesn't want to stay with him because he is afraid of ghosts which meet on that particular night. (...) The work is permeated with naïve humor. Although we should oppose the ethical character of the work, the poet by some humoristic gesture puts himself on the side of the reader. The work is worth reading, because it resurrects in a very nice way popular beliefs. We could classify it as a passage from a fable to a realistic novella. (...)

(Here follows a rather lengthy review of the content of the tale and its characters and the analysis according to the following criteria: motif, vesture, characters, detail, general character)

Vienna, 25 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review, analysis and critique of the novel Der Oberhof by Karl Immermann

A rather awkward novel if we compare it to the novels of Russian literature which were set to understand great ideas in the development of mankind. *Oberhof* can be classified among the love novels which are known in hundreds of thousands, but this novel rises above the level of average literature for the ladies due to a realistic portrayal of the cultural background of Westphalian day laborers and petty bourgeois individuals. (...) An extract from folk art. A strong passage from a romantic novel toward a realistic one. The world-view is rather shallow; there is nothing idealistic in these people. The peasants are egoists, others are given in caricature, only the deacon is at a higher level. Lisbeth's religion is very odd. Oswald has no world-view at all, except his nationalism. Therefore, the work rises only a little above the level of the 1830s. It draws value from the description of *couleur locale*³⁸⁵: the folk customs. The work has a certain cultural-historical value. (...)

(Here follows a lengthy account and critical analysis of the content of the work and its characters, following the criteria: motif, content, main plot, side plot, characters, detail, general character)

³⁸⁵ French: local color, i.e. milieu in which the plot unfolds.



Members of the Academic Society "Croatia" in Vienna. Ivan is standing, second from the right. Spring of 1919.

Vienna, 26 November 1919 – (22 years and 11 months)

Review and critique of the short story Undine by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué

Motif: love between a man and a nature spirit which ends tragically for the nature spirit. A romantic fable on the way to a novella. The beginning has an allegorical meaning; the relationship between this nature spirit (Undine) with God, by contrast to the man who possesses a soul. Unfortunately, the work becomes more and more fantastic as it evolves, the conception bursts and the artistic value plummets. If it had remained a fable without elements of a novella, it would have greater artistic value. (...)

(Here follows a critical review of the content of the work according to the following criteria: content, main plot, characters, details, general character)

Vienna, 2 December 1919 – (23 years)

Review and critical analysis of the work Isabella of Egypt by Achim von Arnim

Motif: the love of king and a Gipsy woman who wants to take her people back into Egypt. (...) From the moral standpoint, the work is bad: it often touches bare eroticism, attacks the Jews in a nasty way. Although it is a fable, the background is free love. The fable should extricate itself from the forces of the earth; it should obey the laws of logic which Armin just demolished. The work has no value, although the poet has unquestionable narrative gift. (...)

(Here follows a critical analysis of the work and its contents according to the following criteria: content, characters, vesture, details, general character, etc.)

Review and analysis of a folk drama The Perjuring Farmer by Ludwig Anzengruber

The perjuring farmer is a caricature, a criminal unworthy of being the main protagonist of a literary work. (...) The play is a tendentious folk drama directed against the pharisaic traits of his time (what a difference compared to Tartuffe!). If such people as

Anzengruber portrayed really exist, why put this nasty life on stage? The idea is not artistically presented. Love is the basis of art; love hates the pharisaic frame of mind, but doesn't hate the Pharisee. It seeks good traits in him. (...)

(Here follows a critical analysis of the drama and its contents)

Vienna, 9 December 1919 – (23 years)

Review of the tragedy Life and death of St. Genoveva by Ludwig Tieck

The content is epic, so there are not many dramatic elements in the drama (Frankish headquarters and battle with the Moors). Genoveva herself is an ideal, a maximum of moral strength and, therefore, constitutes an epic type. The end of the work which makes a strong impression on the reader (not the observer) is impressive precisely due to its epic character. In the tragedy, we expect that Genoveva will die not seeing her knight any more, but we are glad (epic joy) when they meet again. (...) The prologue and epilogue are held by St. Boniface. I cannot tell whether the work is based more on history or the legend, but it is a worthy attempt to use the riches hidden in Christian legends. (...)

(Here follows a lengthy retelling of the content of the tragedy and the analysis and evaluation of its characters)

Review of the work Promenades of a Viennese Poet by Anastasius Grün

Written in a 16-syllable line, the work is a wailing for freedom suppressed by the reactionary government of Metternich. The work was published in 1831, anonymously. It was dedicated to Uhland who was also fighting for political freedom. It ends with an anthem to a dead emperor who was the last representative of the idea of a united Germany. (...) It would be interesting to read this work once again. Nostalgia for freedom as an eternal value and the fury against slavery give a golden frame and nuance to all these pictures.

Zagreb, 24 December 1919 – (23 years)

Review of the poems The Songs of Mirza Shafi by Friedrich von Bodenstedt

Anacreontic³⁸⁶ poems without any value, reflecting a very low epicurean world-view. Every line is the proof of the poet's shallowness.(...) It is a reflection of certain capit-alistic circles of that time who knew nothing about the strivings of mankind in their age.

Zagreb, 28 December 1919 – (23 years)

A brief critical assessment of the work Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche

A strong language, dithyrambic pictures, and in the background, there lurks the *anima naturaliter christiana*³⁸⁷. Other outpourings of force which brutally ruins everything in existence is the triumph of the animal in man. A sharp observer: the thoughts about marriage are Christian, the striving for *Übermensch* is the striving of man to become absolute; therefore, again a Christian striving. Only, Nietzsche does not deduce any logical laws from these natural tendencies instilled in a human soul (he doesn't want to do that). Below the roaring laughter, arrogant exultation and a parody of Christ at the bottom of the soul – an eternal sadness. (...)

³⁸⁶ ANACREON (550–495 BC), an ancient Greek poet who often used the motifs of love and wine and glorified the brighter sides of life in his poems. Such poetry later became known as Anacreontic poetry.

³⁸⁷ Latin: The soul is Christian by nature.

(Here follow several verses from the work itself, illustrating Merz's last sentence about eternal sadness in this work of Nietzsche.)

Zagreb, 5 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of Goethe's novel Wilhelm Meister

The novel of an old German type... As a novel, it isn't worth much, because 1) from the formal side, it is too expansive, 2) the political background is too narrow, 3) realistic details are too schematic (we don't know what the main characters look like), 4) the action does not develop biologically, but as if in a mirror. (...)

The society which Goethe portrays is ordinary people without any deeper education and without higher moral pretensions who live instinctively. As objective morality doesn't exist for Goethe, it is natural that the entire life from love scenes all the way to bohemian rooms after a tumultuous night are described without any passion at all; it would be better to say that this life evolves biologically (we see it in the mirror of reflection) and every man of varied world-views can condemn or accept these acts in his own way... The idea of the work is to show how the strongest events influence the development of the soul. (...) As Goethe has no developed world-view, we can observe the evolution of his ideas only from the standpoint of natural morality. (...)

(Here follows a short account of the content of the novel, critique of its composition and the analysis of characters)

Zagreb, 7 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Critical review on a well-known book by Martin Luther To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation

The first part of this book of Luther³⁸⁸ describes corruption that was destroying Christianity, which provoked his energetic reaction and, at first, he was deeply convinced that he was doing the right thing. However, he lacked theological education and along with that, he became arrogant and started criticizing even those things which he didn't understand. He ignored the entire Canon Law, as well as worldly laws, claiming that Bible was sufficient as a substitute for it. He claimed he knew Aristotle better than St. Thomas and demanded that pagan works must not be read. He recommended all the people to be engaged in land cultivation, in order to fulfill God's commandment "in the sweat of thy face..." (theological knowledge!) and banned the taking of interest in financial dealings, although he admitted he wasn't very knowledgeable in those matters. (...) According to him, a priest didn't have to be anointed by another, but it was sufficient that the people choose him from their own midst. Along with all these segments which show lack of theological knowledge, there are places where he demanded the pope to live in poverty, public houses to be abolished, and other things. (...) In this work, Luther's strong personality, as if chiseled in marble, can be seen fighting mercilessly against evil, but at the same time falling into a huge mistake of meddling into things he didn't understand. It is tragic when influential people with such an authority err; they destroy century-old institutions and spoil the generations.

³⁸⁸ This is the first of three main Luther's works with which he started the reformation in 1520.

Zagreb, 8 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Short comment on the Book of German Poetry (1624) by Martin Opitz

An interestingly written scientific work. Develops a theory of German poetry. (...) Although he brings a lot of his own poems, he is a very bad poet. With him everything is form and reason. He uses mythological beings and relies on Ronsard and Henisius.

Short comment on the comedy Horribiliscrififax (1664) by Andreas Gryphius

The comedy continues in the tradition of scattered scenes of H. Sachs, who imitates Plautus. The moral decadence of soldiers is a cultural-historical document from the 30 years' war. Gryphius is a sorry pinnacle. (...) There are many obscenities; of course, in presenting them Gryphius stigmatized the moral decadence of the army. He sticks to Opitz's principles that comedy must present only bad people and mustn't use common talk.

Zagreb, 12 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

An extensive reflection on literary critique after reading the novella The Saint by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer

In a successful paper, *Poets, readers and critics*,³⁸⁹ Petar Grgec proves with a sharp eye how the value of works of art is very relative: it depends on the spiritual horizon of the epoch, poet and reader. We are going to like a work of art if the spiritual horizon of the poet is greater than that of the reader. It, therefore, happens that especially small people enjoy reading poets with a small artistic horizon but will cease enjoying them if with time, they develop and reach a higher level of spiritual horizon than the one in which the work was written. These are Grgec's thoughts.

For this reason, I don't like Meyer's work. His spiritual horizon in the observation of history is minimal. Due to the fact that the protagonists of this story are important historical figures and that a reader who knows even a little bit of history has a formed view about St. Thomas of Canterbury, this novella seems to us to be a caricature of truth. Meyer could have elaborated this content literally, only with changed names and the work could be worth reading. As we know that the protagonists of this story are well known historical figures, we already have a predisposition for reading; every stroke which collides with history is painful and destroys the impression of the work. From this point of view, every serious reader will judge this work relative to the time when it was created (1880). More probably, he will lay the book aside dissatisfied: dissatisfied because he knows that such a development cannot correspond with the truth and that the historical background for the poet is only a means to achieve two things: firstly, to write an interesting story and secondly to show to the people his "correct" attitude which he has taken with respect to the Church.

Only a real Christian can be an objective critic

The evolution of literature has shown that an objective reader of the 1880s had the right intuition: we have today a range of excellent biographies of saints, works which are in themselves a poetic kind and which stand on the border between a novel (story) and a monograph. In this respect the classical representatives are Stolz's *St. Elisabeth*, Jørgensen's *St. Francis of Assisi* and, so they say, his most successful work *St. Catherine of Siena*. In art, the principle of truth and probability (even in a fable) should dominate above everything. Therefore, the authors of these works study history seriously, all possible manuscripts, visit the areas where their protagonists lived and give us a maximum

³⁸⁹ *Hrvatska prosvjeta*, Year VI, 1919, Nos. 11 and 12.

of probability. If history or any other science in a couple of years would advance so much as to be able to explain certain events in the lives of these people or their age, we will not want to read these works anymore; the reader, therefore, seeks a maximum of truth. The most objective critics can only be great persons in the Christian sense because Christianity places demands upon their lives which in a span of two thousand years have proven to correspond to the most ideal condition in every epoch.

Interesting reflections about the legitimacy of fasting and its usefulness

Let's take for instance the attitude towards fasting. Even before the war at a time of general European satiety people considered fasting a crazy absurdity with which religion meddles in the personal life of an individual. Many devout Catholics also viewed this demand of all positive religions skeptically. The time of European hunger has arrived; many prejudices have disappeared and the people became preoccupied with many spiritual values. In the eyes of those who were forced to starve, those who abstained from food willingly attained a special aura. These people instinctively felt that abstention from food is a postulate of love towards one's neighbor. This is how one historical epoch proved that fasting is something elevated.

But, let us take another historical era, e.g. the time of Fichte's idealism when youth, imbued with national enthusiasm tried, in a Spartan way, to gain healthy bodies and to be prepared for great acts by strengthening their will. Isn't fasting, along with other means, one of the most successful means for achieving that aim? To the "Spartans" of that day surely everyone who reduced his bodily needs to a minimum was worthy of respect. Here, this is how another great epoch proved that the postulate of positive religions with regard to fasting is actually magnificent.

People who do not think observe everything from the current point of view and due to that are unable to objectively judge neither life nor art under the magnifying lens of eternal truths. Their means of measurement is too narrow; it is that small measure of an ephemeral world-view. But, there is a world-view which through the centuries builds its conclusions on an objective observation of everything that exists, life, art and which strings through the history its objective and harmonious critical view on all the events which develop and change. This organized critical view is the view of the Church which developed like a mustard seed into a great tree. The critique will, therefore, be the most objective when we observe the works in the light of Christian truths whose reliability has been proven by the centuries. In such a way, we shall arrive at a maximum of objective critique; it will become absolute only when God himself speaks through us.

Assessment and critique of Falstaff in the light of Christian principles

Here is a drastic example: is there anyone who didn't laugh at Shakespeare's Falstaff? Literary critique claims that Falstaff is one of the most successful comical figures in world literature. But try to bring into a theatre a man worn out by hunger and let him watch the gluttonous fatso, this huge barrel which thinks only of food and drink and other bodily pleasures. The hungry spectator will go mad looking at Falstaff, because hunger refined in him the sense of social responsibility and he will hate the man, both in life as well as on stage (and other arts!), who indulges beyond measure while the hungry ones suffer in greatest misery.

But literary critics who until now created critical norms, lived in the last three centuries satiated, just like Shakespeare, and simply failed to notice that Falstaff, in a very sharp external elaboration, is a mean man whom we cannot like. And if we had asked the opinion of the Church, she would tell us with her final stance that intemperance in food and drink is a sin, and the sin is nasty. Yes, but the critics are usually authorities unto themselves and do not wish to penetrate into the beauty of eternal ideas and observe art from that point of view. This is where the words of Grgec come true: "It is likewise hard

to determine the highest level of poetic creative force for all people and all times. We listed some poets in a line of geniuses thus declaring the highest level of the poetic gift of yesterday. But who will dare to say that in the future someone will not appear who will supersede these geniuses?" We can imagine such people compared to whom perhaps Shakespeare will vanish like Ivo Vojnović or D'Annunzio have compared to Shakespeare. The evolution of world-views among the broad audience proved to us that even Shakespeare is not an absolute ideal any more: Falstaff's appearance perhaps destroys artistic harmony. By this I do not mean to say that he descended to the level of D'Annunzio. We have proven that the doctrine of the Church with its objective critical apparatus, whose development is conditioned by historical development and different milieus (because all the teaching is concentrated like the mustard seed in the Gospel), is the most objective criterion for judging life and art.



View of Vienna

The doctrine of the Church is the safest criterion for literary critique

We could then maintain that every man can give his objective judgement only if he reflects what the Church thinks about that. In many ways – yes. If for example he sees an adultery in a novel, or a sodomy sin in a picture, and the author enjoys presenting it from the view-point of the freedom of marriage, and goes on enjoying it, every firm Christian will be able to say that this is evil, even if he couldn't immerse himself into all the phases of this act. If he is convinced in the truthfulness of his world-view, he will be convinced in his right judgement too.

It is a completely different matter in a Christian professional critic. He will be able to immerse himself in all the phases which the work of art demands of him and will be able to sense the nuances of inconsequence, that line between the good and sin because he is going through it on a daily basis or tries to objectively experience the most valuable life – the Christian life – so that he is able to notice very easily when the logical and psychological development of the work of art begins to depart from the tracks of objective Christian truths. With this we come to the conclusion that a critic, who is gifted for this kind of work, must cultivate an intensive Christian life (the life of the Eucharist, abstinence, social life), and must strive to become as great a man as possible – he must strive towards sanctity.

Review and critique of the work Lost Son by Paul Heyse

The work elaborates the life and death of the archbishop Thomas Beckett, the English martyr whose execution was ordered by king Henry II. Merz narrates extensively the

content of this work, expressing dissatisfaction in the manner in which this saint is presented and ends with the following critical remarks:

(...) We shouldn't even think that Thomas Beckett as presented in this work is in anyway saint; a saint who joyfully and discretely does his penance, who shines with light everywhere he goes. There is not a word about the knowledge of religious life; generally, the psychological causality is too romantic and the work cannot satisfy more refined needs. (...) General character: realistic story, formally very elaborated. Everything is stylized as if a Frenchman was doing the concept. Objective tone is kept, although there are many details smelling of hatred towards Catholicism.

Review and critique of the work Huttens' Last Days by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer

(...) The work is too tendentious; as a matter of fact, permeated with a hatred of the Roman Church. Only such a reader can enjoy this work who has the same limited historical level as C. F. Meyer, i.e. that reformation "liberated" the Germans from "the papal Antichrist", from "spiritual slavery", etc. (...) Meyer has a terrible understanding of Catholic saints; he holds that they are gloomy figures, sad people, not full of happiness and joy. (...)

(Here follows a short critical review of the content of the work and its characters)

Zagreb, 14 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Review and critique of the novel Hadlaub by Gottfried Keller

Motif: the love of a medieval poet from the beginning of the 14th century which ends in marriage. Hadlaub, the son of a free peasant, comes to Zurich, learns to write, paint, sing. He falls in love with the daughter of a bishop and some nun; they seem to have gotten this child before their ordination. Here that strange passion of liberal authors is seen, including also Meyer, to present sinful relations in a beautiful way. This psychological absurdity shouts that it is a lie, a huge lie; it is impossible that a bishop or a nun could retain their peaceful and contented conscience, moreover living in a medieval religious environment, as if they were a family who got a child in a legal manner. The profile of the bishop and the nun are therefore false, and if we wish to enjoy reading this story, we must either forget about them or must imagine that they are a lawful husband and wife. Artistic pleasure seeks harmony between truth, goodness and beauty. (...)

Here follows a retelling of the content of the novel and its critical analysis according to following criteria: motif, content, characters, realistic detail, psychological detail, vesture, general character. Merz concludes his critical account with the words:

(...) A very fine irony weaves it way throughout the work, especially at the beginning where the author places the present and the future one beside the other. When drawing pretty faces of young girls, with the same stroke he shows their ugly faces as they will look like after several years; or when speaking about knights who are at the peak of their powers, he mentions how in a couple of years one of them will be torn apart by wheels. The tragedy of life in such a satanic manner seems to be hovering above the entire work like a bat.

Zagreb, 15 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Commendably about impressive letters by Terseglav from captivity in Russia

In today's *Narodna politika* they published beautiful letters by Terseglav³⁹⁰ (editor of *Slovenac*) from captivity (Ekaterinburg). He writes about the great mission of new

³⁹⁰ Franc TERSEGLAV (1882–1950), Slovenian Catholic journalist, writer, translator. Student of bishop Antun Mahnič and Janez Krek. A pronounced Catholic personality in Slovenia. The writer of numerous

Russia which should unite with Rome, about the battle which we must start for the International. He ends how he doesn't expect remuneration from people, but only from above; that for him the only goal is working for the glory of God and for the Church.

Critical review of the novella Landvogt auf Greifensee by Gottfried Keller

A beautiful, technically rather good novella. Every lady will talk about it with pleasure; doesn't suit the higher needs. (...)

(Here follows a retelling of the content of the novella)

Zagreb, 16 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Critical review of the content of the drama Honor by Hermann Sudermann

Naturalistic and technically fine-tuned drama. When the generation which is portrayed in it dies, no one will bother to read it. This drama is very shallow and its notions of honor are very, very tiny. (...)

The very idea of relative honor is irrationally motivated. He tells the story of Taft (one of the characters in the drama) who was in Tibet visiting a nobleman, who sent him his own wife to bathe him. He didn't even touch her and the entire people rose against him offended at his scorn of such a valuable gift. This is pure imagination: such a notion of honor cannot exist anywhere. *Anima naturaliter christiana*³⁹¹ speaks against that. This is what we must take as a philosophical foundation and on it build a universal notion of honor. Everything which departs from the natural morality is dishonorable. On this the specific customs of various peoples, classes, persons are built and we find different concepts of honor which are subjected to age, customs, etc. Sudermann calls these passing "values" honor and shows their collision. But, from the philosophical point of view, this is not honor, these are only prejudices, and all the people, especially Robert (a character in the drama) are miserable when they act only instinctively, according to the drive of their interior, lacking in spiritual greatness to rise above their milieu. In a word, Sudermann showed a low level of humanity which lives without faith. (...)

(Here follows a lengthy retelling of the content of the drama and a critique of its characters)

Zagreb, 19 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Christian principles, if endorsed within the legislature, contribute to a general prosperity of the society

In the development of states one sees a tendency toward the Absolute. As Christianity is absolute truth, there will be progress in the development of everything, including state law, state institutions, if they put into practice Christian principles in their legislature, not only with regard to the demands of Christian morality, but the demands of Christian values, too. They demand of the person and of the state to restrain themselves, to become something more than their natural substance, i.e. to implement life norms for an individual, as well as for the greater organizational units which are otherwise contrary to nature. In America, for instance, they banned alcohol and thereby America came to a Christian thought by revolution: *apstinentia vera pax invenitur*³⁹². Every real evolution –

works on the topic of religion and an engaged Catholic layman. During World War I he was on the Russian front, and then, until 1920 in captivity in Siberia. In 1910 he wrote a handbook for the members of the Slovenian Eagle Organization entitled *The Golden Book of Slovenian Eagles* which was translated into Croatian and adapted by Ivan Merz in 1924.

³⁹¹ Latin: Soul is Christian by its nature.

³⁹² Latin: Real peace is attained by renunciation (From the booklet *The Imitation of Christ*).

in the life of an individual or mankind – is a path toward Christian perfection. Everything else is decadence.

Zagreb, 23 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

*A lengthy review of the content and analysis of the novel
Debit and Credit by Gustav Freytag*

(...) There are two ideas in this voluminous work: 1. Human happiness lies in work, and 2. in work for one's nation. The author conducted these ideas through his work in a masterly way, but as it cannot be a human purpose, we lay aside this work with a question: why all this work, why all these troubles? (...) This glorification of work for the sake of the work is a terrible philistine philosophy which takes away human dignity. (...) From the ethical point of view the work is worthless, and therefore, from the esthetic point of view, too. It lacks poetry. Liberal authors suppress the religious element in these souls by force. To Anton (a character in the novel) it never occurred in his whole life that there is a God, never felt that there is some greater power, likewise, with almost all the characters in the novel. This, of course, is one big lie because every man, even if he lives outside of the human environment, must have moments when he feels a greater power that can destroy him. (...) The author's world-view is, therefore, very shallow. His main protagonist whom he wanted to idealize confirms this. He works purely on an instinctual level, drinks brandy, smokes; when he becomes poor, he sacrifices tobacco, but there is not a word about some higher social consciousness. Anton is, therefore, the type of an industrious German from the second half of the 19th century, who created the mighty German state which was destined to collapse, because it was materialistic.

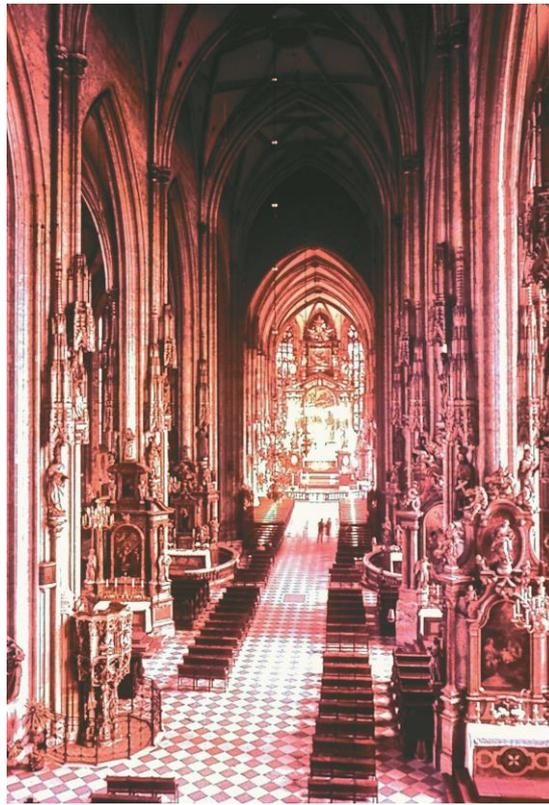
The work is a cultural-historical picture from the 1870s. It shows the ascent of the civil class and the decline of the aristocracy. The Polish uprising is the historical background. (...)

(In the continuation, there follows a lengthy critical account and comment on individual characters in the novel)

Zagreb, 25 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Attends a communist assembly

I attended a protest communist assembly. Comrade DeliĆ and Dr. Radošević spoke against the white terror in Hungary. According to them, the situation in Hungary is terrible: white armies destroy, kill and butcher thousands of innocent people. Comrade DeliĆ spoke in a very objective manner: he developed his thought on why the Hungarian Commune collapsed. The reason is the lack of international consciousness. One Serb used phrases against capitalism, including the Zagreb capital, while Dr. Radošević said very illogically that they would kill every socialist who would commit a crime; a moment later he praised the Russian Commune which abolished the death penalty. Communism has three quarters of truth in it. Those great ideas which move the masses are Christian property. Poor masses led by leaders without a soul!



Interior of the Vienna cathedral where Ivan used to come to pray

Zagreb, 29 January 1920 – (23 years and 1 month)

Attended two lectures of a new religion of “Absolutists”

I attended two lectures in the Evangelical school about a new religion called “Absolutists”. A certain Mr. Tomić, thin, meagre, short haircut, elongated face, dark complexion is the Zagreb representative of this religion. The audience consists of an intelligent class of workers, lower clerks and female accountants. The religion seems to be a Buddhist sect which could win a lot of people if they put it on a scientific basis. They are based on the theory of absolute evolution. Chaos breeds Cosmos. We are in the process of that development. Higher organisms are developed from lower ones. Man, therefore, developed from a monkey. Consciousness is eternal, but it expands. We must strive towards interior perspectives to get to know our inner universe. Happiness is within us, and the evolution of the universe, as well as that of man is a necessity. We must become aware of this necessary development and boost it with our consciousness. Pain is a conflict between desires and possibilities. Mr. Tomić spoke with conviction, with an enthusiasm which shows that he has internalized all these ideas and that he sincerely strives for truth. In every vibration of his voice one could feel the yearning for absolute happiness, and one could also feel the long wandering that he has been through until he finally found peace in this religion. The audience listened with attention; but, what is true in this religion, what they like, alas, is found in a more magnificent form in their own religion. They don't know Christianity. What a happy moment it would be for Mr. Tomić if he finally, after this long search, got to know Christianity.

Such sects thrive in a diseased society and show that the Christians did not fulfil their task. These people desire to get to know Christianity individually, and therefore, societies are necessary where they can talk about these matters completely freely, without

constraints. In all the possible societies, sects, beliefs, everybody can study the *anima naturaliter christiana*.³⁹³

Zagreb, 2 February 1920 – (23 years and 2 months)

Lengthy account and comment on Truth and Poetry – the autobiography of Johann Wolfgang Goethe 1749 - 1831

He grew up in Protestantism, the reason for his fall off from religion

Truth and Poetry is a wonderfully written Goethe's autobiography where the author wanted to present the spirit in which he grew up and to bring close to us the cultural-historical milieu in which he developed. He succeeded in that, although he left out many things, added others, disturbed the chronological order, etc. It is especially interesting to study religious presumptions which had an impact on his development. Brought up in a Protestant milieu, where every house is a sect for itself, he never met persons with a broad Christian world-view. Quarrels among the Protestants were so miserable: divisions broke out due to dogmatic understanding and the religious life of *Herrenhutters*³⁹⁴ consisted more in a sentimental religious feeling, not in a rationally founded Christianity. Official Protestantism was boring to him. Already as a child he wanted to share his religious difficulties with someone, he tried confession, but in Protestantism confession is such a formal matter that he remained unsatisfied. It is also interesting what non-scientific works about Christianity Goethe read. As we gather from this autobiography, Goethe was gifted by nature and everybody admired him. Already in childhood he amassed a huge knowledge: he knew the Bible in minutest detail, wrote comedies, created verses with extreme ease, made drawings, danced, etc. He went through many religious difficulties in his youth, without finding anyone who could help him. He grew up in a Protestant milieu and felt instinctively that Protestantism cannot satisfy him. Therefore, he searched for Truth and one can say that he was searching for it his whole life. He lost faith in all authority, and therefore, he couldn't believe that there is an objectively true religious system. Goethe is, therefore, indirectly a child of Protestantism. It is due to Protestantism that he dropped off from religion. Those grand ideas which he intuitively understood were Christian, something he admits on a number of occasions. The non-Christian elements, his leaning towards pantheism does not make Goethe great. And to take him as a religious authority, as is often done, is absurd: in religious matters, he is practically uneducated. One should only delve deeper into his development. He is an enormous talent and in his works, there are so many hidden truths that we can fully surrender to pleasure.

The influence of Christianity on art and culture

It is magnificent to think that all these authors, no matter how much they were conscious enemies of Christianity, cannot shake it off themselves and unwittingly they think in a Christian way. Equally, all great works of world art, even those made by the greatest enemies of Christianity, are a glorification of Christianity, because it exerts its influence, directly or indirectly, in their life. If it weren't for that, the whole culture would collapse in an instant, and it is the element which keeps it upright. Therefore, it is pointless to ignore the works of non-Christians or to try to prove with all our might that certain artists had a favorable opinion of the Church. Nothing of this is necessary: everything great in life is the product of Christianity (*animae naturaliter christiana*³⁹⁵), of a direct or indirect influence of the Church.

³⁹³ Latin: Soul is Christian by nature.

³⁹⁴ *Herrenhutters* – a Protestant sect

³⁹⁵ Latin: Souls are Christian by their nature.

Goethe is not a religious authority because he hasn't experienced life sufficiently

Goethe cannot be a religious authority because he hasn't experienced life sufficiently. He always had money: wherever he came, everybody received him with open arms. The entire history – from pain to pleasure – he got to know only indirectly, creating his observer's judgement, but participating in the battle of life only very little. His only experience was in love and social relations. Due to that he couldn't intuitively understand Christian truths. We can see this missing element in Faust too. He throws himself into the maelstrom of life with lots of money. Faust objectively experiences only love with Gretchen and in her he rises to the objective awareness of his sin, but in religious knowledge he lags behind because he hasn't illuminated life from more than one side and thus cannot make an objective judgement about it.

Goethe never got to know Catholicism in a deeper way

That Goethe in his youth sincerely searched for Truth is proven by the fact that he involved himself with magic, hoping to come to some result. He never got to know Catholicism in a deeper way, and therefore, he couldn't solve Faust's problem (he met a Catholic priest for the first time in 1772). It is interesting that Goethe in his whole work only once spoke about a sexual relationship with his lovers. From his writings, we sense that he became "more liberal" when he became engaged to Lilia, because he describes the feeling of a fiancé who doesn't have to restrain passion any more, etc. As Goethe had a very refined taste, he liked the liturgy and customs of Catholicism. About the nobility, he always speaks with veneration and this makes a philistine impression on us.

The work is of a great importance because Goethe knew all the important personalities of his day and he portrays them clearly, giving also his judgement about the others (in this he is very mild). (...)

(At the beginning of the review Merz firstly gives us a lengthy summary of each of the 20 books of Goethe's autobiography. Then he makes a comment after which there follows a lengthy listing of important personalities of that time with whom Goethe was in contact)

Zagreb, 6 February 1920 – (23 years and 2 months)

A very extensive review of the content of the drama

Kätchen of Heilbronn by Heinrich von Kleist

I don't know the assumptions from which this romantic drama evolved, and therefore, I will analyze it only superficially. This work is the fruit of an unsure spirit with an incomplete world-view. There are no classical values, although I don't deny that the idea of absolute faithfulness gives a special charm to the work. The rest is clumsily put together: the construction of the drama is clearly visible.

(In the continuation, Merz analyzes the drama at length according to the following criteria: 1. Exposition, 2. Plot, 3. Culmination, 4. Resolution of the plot, 5. Catastrophe)

Zagreb, 7 February 1920 – (23 years and 2 months)

Review and critique of the tragedy Penthesilea by Heinrich von Kleist

I haven't been reading Racine for long, but I think that this tragedy is very similar to *Phaedra* and others. The content is antique³⁹⁶, and the main female protagonist is passion incarnated: here this is the passion of love and craving for fame. (...)

I think that the problem of the tragedy is based on the mystery of sin (*iniquitatis*): it marks the opposition between what a person is destined for and the nothingness of today's

³⁹⁶ From ancient Greek history and mythology (Troy, Ulysses, etc.)

cosmos. But, Christianity knows only relative tragedy, and if we were to observe this assault of passion from the objective point of view, we would reject this entire tragic motif, because all of these passions are sins. We should, therefore, measure ethical values outside of the Christian works with their own measurement. (“Where there is no Law, there is no transgression” (*Romans 4.15*). “But when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” (*Romans 2.14*) And their own ideal measure is the natural morality which in pagan peoples, I think, is possessed by a cultural ideology of their own. This is what we like in the classical dramas of Racine, Goethe, Ibsen. In Ibsen, only the costume belongs to the Christian epoch, but his protagonists behave as if Christianity didn’t exist at all. We must measure Christian protagonists with a measure of Christianity which is much greater, so that many protagonists, who would be great persons in popular measurement, would under this measure be pygmies.

Here follows a lengthy retelling of the content of the drama whose action takes place in ancient Troy, and the analysis of its characters – Ulysses, Achilles, Penthesilea, Hector, etc. and everything is intertwined with Greek mythology. The review of the drama follows these criteria: 1. Foreplay, 2. Exposition, 3. Plot, 4. Apex, 5. Resolution of the plot, 6. Catastrophe. At the end of the lengthy review of this tragedy and its analysis, Merz concludes his thinking with the following comment:

The tragedy of *Penthesilea* is a colossal phenomenon in which two strong characters collide so that, from this collision, both are blown up into pieces. But only that person is able to enjoy this drama who has undergone similar battles between vainglory and love. The idea of love is that noble idea due to which we develop a liking of Penthesilea and Achilles, whereas vainglory destroys this harmony (we would say – sin), so that the main protagonists must perish, if this disharmony prevails. The pagans didn’t have a clear notion about moral compensation and they transferred that yearning inborn in human nature that every sin must be accounted for, into the other world. The one who sins against the order must die, this is their philosophy; we, on the other hand, see in it only the symbolized idea: evil must be paid for. But, as Christian economy links this world to the other one, this payment does not necessarily have to occur here. The important thing is that evil must be compensated for. (whatever we study, sin or goodness, everything is an apology of Christianity!) (...) ³⁹⁷

Vienna, 22 February 1920 – (23 years and 2 months)

Visit to a monastery in Mödling, Rogulja’s death

Yesterday evening in the Academic Society *South* (formerly “Croatia”) Žaren gave a brilliant scientific lecture about Bolshevism. Earlier I visited, together with Ivanković and Fuchs, the monastery St. Gabriel near Mödling, examined the church, the colonial museum (brilliant Chinese woodcuts, the whole art chiseled in wood) and the printing shop.

Today Čepulić³⁹⁸ came from Zagreb bringing fatal news that Pero Rogulja³⁹⁹ has died. God have mercy on him! A terrible blow for us all! The strongest personality in the

³⁹⁷ This is the end of the 16th notebook of Ivan Merz's Diary, covering a period from 17 July 1919 until 6 February 1920.

³⁹⁸ Avelin ČEPULIĆ (1896–1938), at that time a student of medicine, was Merz's close friend and upon return to Zagreb became his co-worker in the leadership of the Croatian Eagle Association and an engaged Catholic layman. As a physician, he was a great benefactor of the poor people of Zagreb whom he treated without charge.

Croatian Catholic Movement. He died at the peak of his strength, just like the late Eckert⁴⁰⁰!

Korošec is the vice-president of a new ministry. Maybe the people will be a bit relieved of Pribičević's terror.



Imperial palace Schönbrunn in Vienna

Vienna, 25 March 1920 – (23 years and 3 months)

Impressions from the Catholic Congress of the Archdiocese of Vienna

A great Catholic Congress of the Archdiocese of Vienna. Austrian Catholics did an enormous amount of work lately. The networks of their organizations are everywhere; they have a strong press. I heard lectures about the work of Caritas which holds two-thirds of all charitable organizations and which is organized in an exemplary way. One priest spoke brilliantly about the international and inter-confessional organization for the protection of children and said that the Pope had given them 20 million lire. The thoughts with the greatest impact are those concerning the universal Catholic consciousness. So, in the afternoon, during a lecture about the press, one secretary of the Dutch Catholic cooperatives presented the work of the Dutch for the Catholic press: how the organizations on their own initiative began demanding papers on railway stations, etc. In Italy, it is the duty of every organized member to hold one Catholic paper.

³⁹⁹ Petar ROGULJA (Sarajevo, 1888–1920), Catholic journalist and politician. Graduated from the Zagreb University. He was involved with social issues and was inspired by the ideas of Janez Krek. He wrote numerous articles and discussion papers about the aims and guidelines of the Croatian Catholic Movement. His booklet *Before the Dawn (In Croatian)* (Zagreb, 1916) marked the beginning of ideologization and politization of the Croatian Catholic Movement. He was editor of *The Rijeka Paper* (Rijeka), *News* (Zagreb) and *National Politics* (Zagreb). He was a member of the Croatian Catholic Seniorate, and Co-founder and first president of the Croatian People's Party.

⁴⁰⁰ Rudolf ECKERT (Travnik, 1889 – Rijeka, 1915), a Catholic journalist. From 1907 until 1911 he studied in Zagreb. In 1909 he was elected president of the Croatian Catholic Society *Domagoj*, and already the next year became the editor of *Luč Magazine* (Zagreb). In 1911 he went to Munich, and in 1913 to Luvain to study national economy, sociology and philosophy. One of the ideologues and most important promoters of the ideas of the Croatian Catholic Movement. He was the editor of *The Rijeka Paper* (Rijeka) and *News* (Zagreb). He was a member of the Croatian Catholic Seniorate. After being drafted in the Austro-Hungarian army, he got ill and died in Rijeka with a reputation of holiness.

The crowd was elated. There is a touch of the martyr's élan in these worn-out people who, after bloody battles with socialists and atheistic capitalism remained enthusiastic followers of Christ and obedient to their archbishop F. Piffl⁴⁰¹ whom they love immensely.

Vienna, Easter Monday, 5 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

A deep experience of liturgical spiritual exercises

I spent the time from Good Wednesday until today in St. Gabriel near Mödling. This was my most beautiful Easter; I lived through the artistic reflection of great events – Christ's passion and his Easter – identifying myself with liturgical art. At the start, we fasted, kept silence and meditated. When the worldly noise dispersed and the soul remained still, facing itself, the mud of sin rose from the depths like a foam. This was something that accumulated almost unconsciously. After that, a brilliant singing of lamentations⁴⁰², then a wonderful mass of Holy Thursday with its joy and holy Communion within the solemn mass, just like it was when Jesus established the Holy Eucharist, then the sorrow in the middle of that mass with rhythmical movements of all the religious and a brilliant accompaniment by the orchestra, etc. The unveiling of the cross and the suffering of the Stations of the Cross shook my soul deeply. On Saturday, again I felt that immense joy over the resurrected Savior which found such a wonderful expression in liturgy.



St. Gabriel monastery in Mödling near Vienna where Ivan performed liturgical spiritual exercises before Easter 1920. Here he developed a great love of the liturgy and later for the liturgical apostolate.

Reflections on liturgy as a central art

Just like theology is a central science, so the liturgy is a central art. It is fully objective and corresponds to Wagner's ideal who wanted to unite all arts into one. Liturgy is the expression of the soul of the Church; it provides foundations to build a new theory of art. In it, like in a mirror, the life of Christ is reflected, not as it seems to us historically, but as it is seen by an objective observer unrelated to time and place, an observer of life from above, looking at the supernatural connection of all the events: for instance, as an angel is observing it. In such a way, art becomes an objective mirror for life which catches also those threads which an ordinary person doesn't notice. Liturgy has reached its apex: it is the greatest art work in the world, and at the same time it is the central art because it artistically portrays the life of Christ which is the center of history. All other arts must use the same method as the Holy Spirit is doing in liturgy: the artist, for instance, must present the motifs of war, love, adultery, murder and many other topics of art in supernatural

⁴⁰¹ Cardinal Friedrich Gustav PIFFL (1864–1932), the archbishop of Vienna

⁴⁰² Lamentations – part of the Old Testament, allegedly by the prophet Jeremias, which were sung in the rites of Holy Week before the liturgical reform.

connection and the better he does it, the greater the value of the work of art. Of course, this demands that the artist is holy. Let's take for instance when Christ says: Who looks at a woman with lust, commits sin in his soul. For Christ that is enough and he cannot elaborate this idea further because he must sow the seed of all ideas which rule and will rule mankind. Tolstoy elaborated this idea in the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and he did it very well: he observes human society objectively and it is reflected in a particular way in his soul. The image in this mirror shows all the threads of delusion and sin in which modern society has entangled itself... Tolstoy, therefore, uses the liturgical method. That saying in the Gospel is only a link which this novel elaborates. This method can be applied to all works of art, and if they are God-centered, they have artistic value.

The monastery St. Gabriel will remain in my memory for life. It shows how the Catholic Church sows everywhere new, beautiful flowers. There are around 300 German theologians who are going into Togo, New Guinea and other countries to spread the Gospel of Christ. Mostly these are strong, beautiful people, prone to silence and humble. They get up at 3:15 in the morning and concentrate all their love on the divine service. St. Gabriel is a small Beuron.⁴⁰³

Watched in the theatre the drama Devotion to the Cross by Pedro Calderon

Several days ago, I saw Calderon's drama *Devotion to the Cross*. Only male roles. A romantic "destiny-tragedy". (...)

(Here follows a brief content of the drama)

Visited a mental asylum

I was also in Steinhof and saw various mentally ill women. They are terrible. One Polish Jew knows that she has mania and behaves rather nicely. Another, a tiny woman, sings holy songs, lies on the floor and drags herself on the ground. A third shivers and continuously loses her associations. (...)

Vienna, 18 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

Suggestions for a political battle against liberalism and communism

Yesterday there was an interesting session of *South*⁴⁰⁴. Apart from Avelin, Žaren and Besednjak, there were Dr. Isidor Cankar, Dr. Šarabon, Ivančić and another elder. We wanted to send to the People's Party a paper in which we would advise them what kind of counter-action to undertake against communists who are preparing to stage a revolution in Yugoslavia after the harvest. They already started campaigning among the army. Besednjak proposed that we too start campaigning among the army, and Čepulić proposed that all non-communist parties forge a block against them. Some were for the coalition, others were against. There is a great confusion of views. In my opinion the liberal parties are an equally strong, moreover, even stronger enemy than the communists. Liberalism is destroying our morals, poisoning the people slowly, while the communists openly destroy the material culture thinking they will thereby destroy our faith. They have a clear

⁴⁰³ Beuron is a Benedictine monastery in Germany, which was the center of liturgical renewal in Germany and in Europe in the 19th and 20th century.

⁴⁰⁴ *South* (in Croatian *Jug*) was a new name for the former Academic Society *Croatia* which, after the creation of the new Yugoslav state united with the remainder of Slovenian students whose society *Danica* was relocated to Prague. The change of name is reported in *Luč Magazine* of 5 March 1920, No. 8 and 9, p. 70 with these words: "We recently changed the name *Croatia* into *South*, because with the departure of *Danica* from Vienna we, the Croats and the Slovenes, are organized in a single society, and, with regard to that, the old name is not suitable any more. We wish to give to the name of our society a purely Yugoslav character". *South* in 1920 numbered 47 members: 27 Slovenians and 18 Croats. These were the first years of the new Yugoslav state when it was not yet transparent what negative consequences it will have for the Croats. Therefore, there was an initial enthusiasm for the Yugoslav state.

program, and it can easily be foreseen that, should the revolution succeed, they will demolish our printing plants, destroy our system of cooperatives and shoot our leaders. But, this will only make us stronger. Therefore, I think that the principle of our tactics must be this: *The People's Party* mustn't go into coalition either with liberals or with communists. We mustn't organize a resistance against the communist revolution because in such a way we would defend the capitalist economic system which is just as much non-Christian as is the communist one. The key thing now is to promote the idea of Catholicism among the people as a trait which shows us different from the bourgeoisie, as well as from communism. Even a thousand persecutions cannot destroy us if we have dedicated Catholics who will establish their organizations, as soon as the flood of communism subsides. We must precisely build our solid economic program and show the masses who suffer due to the capitalist setup, that it is not only the communists who are fighting for the rights of the poor, but primarily the Christians. We must, therefore, now fight with the communists and the bourgeoisie stressing what divides us, not mentioning what links us (e.g. us and communists the battle against capitalism), because Providence, it seems to me, gave the communists a mission to destroy capitalism and, thereby, establish a balance disturbed by liberalism – to create solidarity.

I am reading *Goethe* by Alexander Baumgartner. Goethe is very well presented from the esthetic point of view. I read *The Leipzig Age* – the work is bad indeed.

I am almost starving.

Vienna, 24 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

Listens to the lectures and participates in the work of societies Logos and South

Yesterday I attended a Logos⁴⁰⁵ academy. The lecture by P. Streicher about the divorce of the Church and the state was interesting. He nicely proved that in principle there must not be any such divorce because the Church from the very beginnings (already in Roman times they requested the abolishment of deities) involved itself in the life of the state wanting to regenerate it. He also quoted the

Syllabus⁴⁰⁶ of Pope Pius IX from 1864 and the opinion of Lacordaire and Montalembert who demanded the divorce of the Church and the state for noble reasons, i.e. to free the Church from under the yoke of the state. Dr. Razowsky lectured about the Bohemian schism.

Tonight, there was the main assembly of South and Dr. Izidor Cankar spoke About the Faith as the Foundation of Culture. He mostly touched upon early Christianity which tried to regenerate only the souls, and everything else came spontaneously. Like that, he asks of us to regenerate our souls, to be the seeds of a new culture. We declared Avelin a senior and gave him the first issue of Naše kolo as a present.

Vienna, 25 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

Impressions of a new artistic crucifix

Our age has found a lasting artistic expression in a big crucifix in the Carmelite Church Döbling, which was completed this year. In the passion of Christ all the pain of the millions is concentrated. Every toe, the hollow stomach, exhausted arms, muscles, everything is as if it was taken from war corpses, etc. Underneath stood the women who prayed. It seems, therefore, that the artist succeeded in presenting this gloomy age. The

⁴⁰⁵ Austrian society for Catholic intellectuals in Vienna

⁴⁰⁶ Pope Pius IX published in 1864 the encyclical *Quanta cura* against the modern deviations and a well-known supplement *Syllabus*, in which he condemns more than 80 misconceptions of that time with regard to the Christian faith and the Catholic Church.

work made a strong impact on me, but I don't know if it will have a lasting value. I should immerse myself in it to see whether from the crucifix the Gloria of conquered pain shines forth. I fear that the answer wouldn't be completely positive; in this too, the work would be a reflection of the present age.



Hofburg – the old residence of the Imperial Habsburg family.

Vienna, 27 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

Comment on the lecture of Fr. Schmidt about the Samaritan woman

Fr. Schmidt gave a lecture today about the scene with the Samaritan woman. He developed psychologically how Christ leaves Judea where the Pharisees threw John the Baptist into prison and want to catch him too. He moves out of the way and travels through the land of people whom the Jews scorn to quench his thirst for the souls. Samaritans had a Decalogue but didn't believe in anything else. Jesus sits by a well, the Samaritan woman comes with a jug in her hand (it is noon) and he asks her water. Christ had a precise plan how to win this soul. He is not thirsty for water, but for something else. The Samaritan woman is wondering how come that he, being a Jew, asks water from her and speaks to her. When he mentions that he possesses a better kind of water of which one never thirsts again, she takes it literally and asks it from him, addressing him already as "Sir", and when he finally tells her that she had five husbands and now lives with one who is not her husband, she remains embarrassed and addresses him as "Prophet". And when she finally wants to know – a brilliant psychological finesse – what is the difference in cult between a Jew and a Samaritan, because this is where they differed, Christ rises above the national conservatism of the Jews, claiming that God can be praised everywhere, but it must be in spirit and in truth. Namely, he had in mind the liturgy, because that is what the Samaritan woman had asked. When Christ tells her that he is the Messiah, this intellectually and morally weak woman is crushed; we are curious what she will answer, but the evangelist brilliantly cuts this scene, the apostles arrive bringing food, and the Samaritan, shaken in her soul runs into town, forgetting her jug, to tell everybody of her encounter. Jesus stays two days in that town and they believed in him. We see that St. John the Evangelist loved the Samaritans because he described this scene in such detail. This is where the first Christian community was formed. Jesus proceeds to Galilee, and on the way a father comes, asking him to heal his son, asking him, however, without faith. Jesus tells him, almost bitterly that his countrymen want only to see the miracles (thinking how the Samaritans quickly believed) and orders him: Go, your son lives. When the father saw that everything transpired according to a certain order, he became a believer, along

with his entire family. This is how Christ now won the entire family. It is clearly visible how Christ takes care to win individual souls and declines the psychosis of the masses.

Today the German nationalists and other Arians closed the University. They are mad at Jews who flooded Germany and Austria.

Vienna, 28 April 1920 – (23 years and 4 months)

Meeting with Yugoslav communists in their assembly

I attended the Yugoslav communist assembly in Café Schlosselhof. The communists wanted to protest in the name of all the students against the terror of the government who sent soldiers at workers in Ljubljana and shot several of them dead. They presented their program and showed a rather low level of education, being ignorant of communism itself. Besednjak and Kamušić opposed them well claiming that the communist leaders are to blame for sending the masses against the army battalions, thus playing games with their lives.

Vienna, 10 May 1920 – (23 years and 5 months)

Comment and critique of Goethe's Torquato Tasso

I saw Torquato Tasso. The work didn't make any impression on me, because I never had those feelings of Tasso. The problem which Goethe resolves here is not a general problem of humanity and as a work of art it can have an impact only on the person who went through a similar string of feelings. No! I think that not even such a person can fully enjoy the work, because the solution is bad. (...) It is characteristic of Goethe that his classicistic characters have no conscience. (...) Tasso is a poet governed only by his feelings. In real life, such a person would be sentenced. (...)

(In continuation, Merz criticizes this work in more detail and agrees with Baumgartner whose judgement of Goethe is unfavorable)

Vienna, 12 May 1920. – (23 years and 5 months)

Profit derived from suffering, desire for ascetic life, flame for limitless heights

Spiritually, I am most productive when I overcome resistance or when I suffer. Until now I suffered and overcame resistance (war, hunger), because Providence placed me in that position. It was then that I suffered gladly. But I still haven't reached those heights to choose the more perfect way – the way of the suffering – willingly. If I correctly analyze my life, I am not spending much more energy for conquering myself, than, let's say, ordinary liberals. I reached a certain height and now it is inertia which is keeping me here. But in me there is a flame for limitless heights, a burning desire for a serene embrace of the Son and the Father and the Spirit, and one can achieve that only by a disciplined, tactical conquering of oneself.

Wouldn't it be possible not to think of food, not to eat to one's satisfaction during lunch, sleep only six hours, receive the Communion daily, practice physical exercise daily and, along with all this loss of energy, systematically study for about ten hours and become proficient in science?! St. Catherine of Siena, pray for me to get that will of steel!⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁷ This is a draft-proclamation of his future rules of life – Ascetic rules which Merz compiled in Paris. He speaks about it in his Paris Diary of 4 November 1921. Ivan perfected these decisions in the course of the years to come.

Vienna, Ascension Day, 14 May 1920 – (23 years and 5 months)

Celebrants of the First Mass – missionaries and a heroic concept of Christianity

I was at St. Gabriel. Seventeen newly ordained priests celebrated their First Mass in a choke-full church. The preacher gave them a severe sermon: about the sacrifices in store for them across the ocean and the model of the missionaries – Jesus Christ who must live in them if they want to execute their heroic task, leave their homeland and parents and go to a far-away land to preach the Gospel and die there.

All these newly ordained priests are strong: they were mostly officers in the war, bony profiles. They make a heroic impression.

If we had missionaries down there, this heroic concept of Christianity would spread very strongly. Phenomena, such as e.g. epicurean Zagreb prebendaries and the secession of the yellow ones⁴⁰⁸ would be exposed to the people in their true light when compared with the heroes of Christianity. Blessed are the people who give birth to missionaries!

Narodna politika printed my letter *Religious Regeneration of Austrian Catholics (in Croatian)*, and in one of the recent issues of *Luč* Magazine there was my letter about students in Austria.

Vienna, 16 May 1920 – (23 years and 5 months)

A rich activity of Catholic youth organizations in Austria and Germany

The Congregation⁴⁰⁹ of *South* functions pretty well already. In the afternoon, I visited Braunias and saw a Dutch Catholic high school paper and a report of Italian Catholic youth organizations (they reckon youth to be people between 16 and 40), which is very militaristic and national. I saw the paper *Unitas* which is a central organ of 33 academic Catholic societies. They are very dynamic; they want to unite the *Scientific Association* and other non-centralized groups. In addition, *Dwickborn*, the union of German Catholic abstinent sports high school organizations, published a small almanac and bought a tower somewhere on the Main River. No doubt, the Catholic high school organizations are very active in Germany.

Awakening and development of Catholic movements in European peoples

Together with Braunias I visited Dr. Katarn, the editor-in-chief of *Gral*, who asked me information about Yugoslav Catholic literature. Of course, I was in the position to give him the desired information. He will get in touch with Maraković and ask him for a letter to be published. From him I got the address of Terhünthe who is an expert on the French Catholic movement. We also visited Isenkraake, the author of a work from experimental theology, etc.

The Germans are very active. They are at the threshold of the romantic era. The Catholic idea which enthused the intellectuals must now penetrate into the masses and create a unified Catholic organism which will by itself beget all branches of a great culture.

When one looks at the development of a universal Catholic movement in all the countries, one sees that the Church has completed a magnificent task; different nations, almost without any organizations with a Christian foundation, and without contact with each other, created independently similar institutions: that Dutch high school paper could be read with gladness by the readers of *Zora* and *Luč* and the other way around.

⁴⁰⁸ Members of a group of Croatian priests and their associates in the first half of the 20th century who advocated the abolishment of the celibate, and their movement was called “the yellow movement”.

⁴⁰⁹ This is the Marian Congregation, an association for the promotion of spiritual life, which was established for the benefit of Catholic students from the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes within the Academic Society *South*.

Catholicism informed the souls, and from this ground a common consciousness has sprouted. It was only necessary to elect the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and the society is here. The consciousness of solidarity is already among the believers. The basis of a cultural, economic and every other kind of progress is: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33). The rest is growing, as the first centuries of Christianity show us. They only cultivated the spiritual, religious education and indirectly the cathedrals, Christian states, philosophy, etc. appeared.



Karlskirche in Vienna

The merits of Jesuits for European culture

I notice that the Jesuits have a huge importance for the European culture. The Reformation was the beginning of anarchy and the current phase is liberalism and bolshevism. When we observe the cultural workers from the other side: in The Netherlands, the Jesuits publish *Bouchershow*, in Germany they are in charge of an intellectual Catholic cultural movement (*Stimmen der Zeit*). Katann is from Kalksburg⁴¹⁰, Maraković is a Jesuit pupil. The activities among the students here are organized by the Jesuits. Indirectly, I myself am greatly indebted to Jesuits through Ljubo and Nino.

Vienna, 27 May 1920 – (23 years and 5 months)

He gave a successful lecture thanks to the Holy Spirit

I thank the Holy Spirit for having granted my prayer for the success of my improvised lecture *On the French Catholic organizations*. I read only Teschunte and combined some thoughts about the Catholic International (*Kipa, Osterr. Korrespondenz, etc.*).

Vienna, 8 June 1920 – (23 years and 6 months)

Debates in the Academic Society South, a beautiful lecture by Fr. Kronseder

Fierce debates are going on in *South*⁴¹¹ on whether to accept the Serbs in the society, in order to initiate among them a movement analogous to ours. Moreover, the Slovenes want the change the name from “Catholic” to “Christian”.

⁴¹⁰ I.e. pupil of a Jesuit high school from Kalksburg in Austria.

⁴¹¹ See footnote of 18 April 1920

Fr. Kronseder gave an excellent lecture in *South* about religion and personality. The Germans generally impress me. The lecture was loaded with interesting scientific material. Not one word was superfluous, and all were true. The last part especially impressed me. He spoke about schismatic circumstances, churches, monks, Mt. Athos, although he was never there in person, everything agreed with what we know from experience in minutest detail. A spirit of greatness descended on us as we listened to him. When we compare a deep life and thorough knowledge of many Catholics in Vienna, we feel so tiny with our writing in various papers; when we observe our inner struggles and our religious life and compare it with the life in the homeland, we seem great, but when we compare it with the inner life of Fr. Schmidt, Fr. Kronseder, we feel our superficiality, rottenness, decay.

God, help me to dig my way out from superficiality and lies!



Members of the Academic Society "Croatia" in Vienna on 20 June 1920. Ivan Merz in the upper row in the middle. The Society accepted Slovenian students and, due to new political circumstances after the war changed its name to Jug (South).

Vienna, 21 June 1920 – (23 years and 6 months)

Public morals in Germany declined due to reformation

Why in the 16th or 17th century a Shakespeare was not born in Germany? Probably because due to the reformation, the public morals of the masses declined and such a milieu could not give birth to a genius. Works characteristic of the morals of that time are Foly's *Gartengeschenk*, Schumann's *Nachtbüchlein*, etc.

Zagreb, 3 August 1920 – (23 years and 8 months)

Participated at the Eagles' camp in Maribor – review and comment

The Eagles' camp in Maribor has passed. We travelled from here by a special student train, male and female students. In Maribor, we slept on hay in a school building. I slept in the League's⁴¹² room with Galkovski, Prikryl, Protulipac, Radić, Lj. Maraković, Meyr and Harting (delegates from the Catholic Students' Secretariat of Germany and Austria). Among us there was complete harmony. Other university students and high

⁴¹² *League* is an abbreviation for the Yugoslav Catholic Students' League, a name covering the united Croatian Catholic High School Youth, the youth of the Croatian Catholic Movement.

school pupils lay in the corridors and other rooms also on hay. The solemn event began in a choke-full large hall. Mika Galkovski and Protulipac spoke. His speech touched a nerve especially when he started naming the government's persecutions in the abolishment of Mary's Congregations, etc. The academic part was boring. Žaren expressed our needs in the area of economy and the study of socialism, bolshevism, but he never mentioned a thorough Christian foundation for all that. The presentation of academic holiday societies was more lively after Žužek got up, a socialist type in our ranks, demanding that we address the practical social issues by going into different classes and studying their needs first-hand. He claimed that only a socialist, more specifically, a Christian-socialist economic order can dismantle capitalism today. Christian socialism, he claimed, is a notion subordinate to solidarism. Feudalism, capitalism and other economic systems were good in their own time, but today's society can be healed only with socialism. He opposes the name *Christian social* because, he says, even the rich among our ranks are social, but not socialist, because if they were such, they would give their rooms at the disposal of workers without a flat, etc. Dr. Lovrenčić attacked him with fury claiming that thereby disagreement is sown into our ranks, and as to the name "socialism", this is only giving-in to atheistic liberalism. He stressed the religious moment which is in peril. His speech was greeted by thunderous applause. I saw that Dr. Lovrenčić is a true character from the old Slovenian Catholic generation which created firm foundations on which Catholic Slovenia began to rise.



Solemn parade of the "Eagles" passes through Maribor, 1 August 1920.

The presentation of the League, although terribly tiring, was nevertheless interesting and showed the different currents reigning among our students. The most interesting was the Krek affair⁴¹³ and for a while we feared that due to it there would occur a rift in the students' movement. God heard our prayers and the spirits were reconciled. The followers of Krek promised that they will obey the episcopate.

Maraković warned us in a touching way to agree that Krek must obey the spirit of the Church. The debate lasted long, because many of Krek's followers didn't fully live through this idea in a revolutionary way and they clamored, not wishing to subordinate themselves to the episcopate.

The solemn procession was great; several thousand male and female eagles, Slovenian and Bohemian passed beside us, then the folk costumes from all our regions, etc. Simple exercises on the ground were well executed, but the speech by Kerstovic well characterized the state of Catholic thought among the intellectuals of present-day

⁴¹³ For Krek, see footnote of 7 May 1917

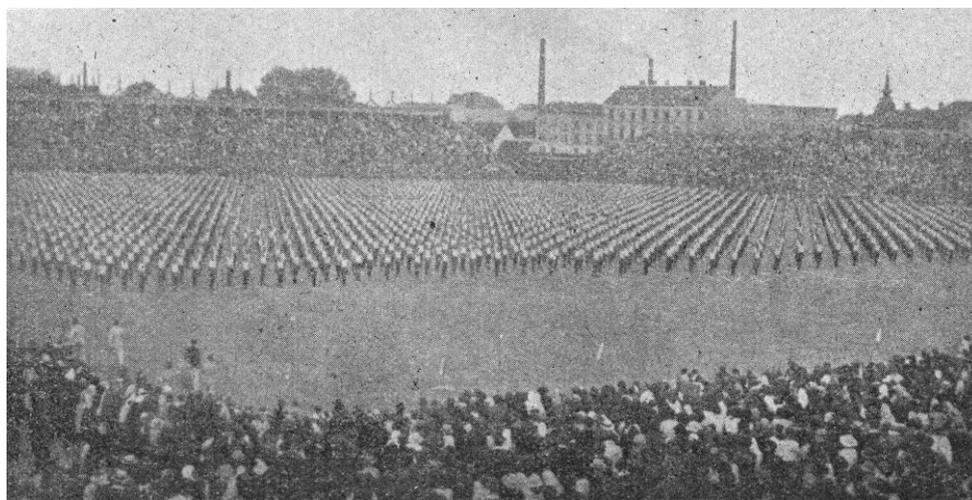
Slovenia. He greeted the regent Aleksandar, he acclaimed him, etc. Not a word on the Catholic mission of the Eagle⁴¹⁴. Our religious mission, contrary to the liberal Falcon was not stressed anywhere, so that the camp cannot claim the results which were expected of it. Among present-day Slovenians everything is work and organization, and the religious moment is pushed into the background. Therefore, we see that with them everything is cold, without enthusiasm. Among the Croats, the religious idea is much stronger, and the organization will sprout by itself in several years' time.

An especially beautiful picture happened out in the field – a wheel dance in Croatian folk costumes, led by Ljubo Maraković. As if somebody sowed white and colorful flowers on the green grass and it danced to the tunes of the folk band.

Maraković was everywhere and observing him closely I became convinced again that he is truly permeated with a living faith.

My presentation about the *Catholic International Student Union* had about a hundred listeners. Maraković presided at the session and heartily welcomed Bohemian and German representatives (Dr. Färber, Meyr, Harting, Kohl and Winter). I spoke with fervor which I got from the most holy Eucharist.

With regard to the International, we made several practical conclusions (exchange of pupils, publication, etc.)



A big "Eagle" rally from several Slav countries in Brno (Bohemia) in 1922. Members of the "Eagle" organization from Croatia took part, among them a young man Alojzije Stepinac who carried the Croatian flag in the solemn "Eagle" parade.

Zagreb, 6 September 1920 – (23 years and 9 months)

Folk assembly in Ivanić-Grad, criticizes bourgeois Christianity

Yesterday in Ivanić-Grad the youth society organized a folk assembly. Dr. Maraković, Kolarek, Mrs. Bedeković, Jesih, Fr. Rihtarić and others including me went there. After the mass and a terribly abundant lunch, Dr. Velimir Deželjić gave a lecture about Christian education. All the girls were in folk costumes (red flower motifs). Members of the Third Order and Domagoj⁴¹⁵ in the morning sang a most beautiful old Slavonic mass, and in the afternoon the Loreto Litanies in Croatian and Ave Maria. The folk festivity followed. Medical student Ivančević spoke, Horvat recited a poem, one pupil

⁴¹⁴ *Eagle* – an abbreviation for the Eagle Catholic Organization.

⁴¹⁵ *Domagoj*, a Catholic society for students established in Zagreb on 10 November 1906 as part of a greater Croatian Catholic Movement.

recited Šenoa's *A Friar's Will*. The Ivanić-Grad town choir did a good job singing. After the wheel dance, they went on dancing in one hall.

Impression: strange are the ways of the Lord. Grace acts everywhere and people are not aware that they are merely puppets of great ideas which move all. The citizens are terribly bourgeois. They observe the faith, but this faith mainly consists in this: we need faith in order to live well and be contented here on earth. The words of my landlord are characteristic: he complains that he can hardly breathe after eating well. Naïve! He eats three different kinds of meat for lunch, and almost no cabbage along with it. This bourgeois Christianity is a terrible danger for us and it is largely responsible that the Christian ideology is being discredited everywhere.

Critical remarks of the clergy, stresses the importance of fasting for spiritual life

The idea of asceticism has not yet penetrated among the people at large, or among the clergy. Wherever I come, the parish priest speaks of Christianity in idealistic terms, toasts for half an hour with a glass of wine to the faith and the homeland, and fills his stomach with geese, ducks and other heavy food. One can perceive inner struggles in him due to this; for instance, he excuses himself that he cannot go with us (it is night time!), because he is overcome with tiredness. And this tiredness he explains with this: he couldn't fall asleep until 3 a.m. This is not an accusation, but it characterizes the level of the inner life of a spiritual leader of a provincial town. It goes without saying that the morals of the citizens who orient themselves according to this priest must be even lower. The quantity of food which my landlord, a rope-maker, consumes is not relevant for his inner life at all: he works a lot, and therefore, he must eat a lot and eat well. Eating for him is a morally indifferent act.

In order for Christianity to rise, the clergy must be holy in the first place. They must always have before their eyes Christ on the Mount of Olives how he overcomes the assaults of all the crosses, Christ who overcomes the devil who tempts him to turn stones into bread. The education of the will is an actual topic for the Croatian clergy!

This superficial Christianity of the Zagreb Theological Seminary is seen also in the smoker's anthem which praises tobacco as a distraction. The theological seminary with such a superficial spirit must produce priests for whom the ideal of Christianity is bourgeois morality: be a Christian to live well on earth. That's why we have such conflicts with the clergy who cannot understand the élan of our Catholic movement which spreads Christ's religion inside and outside of the church, which does not try to win followers with preaching, but creates personalities which leave a lasting trace on their environment.

The ascetic-abstinent idea, along with the following of Christ's passion must be spread. I realized with fear that even our best men, to whom I must give thanks that I found my way to God, didn't get acquainted with that idea. They ought to have lived for several years among the hungry and the miserable, only then they would reach those perceptions.

I think I prefer the socialist masses exhausted by hunger and misery to the well-fed Catholic bourgeois individuals.

Zagreb, 30 September 1920 – (23 years and 9 months)

Contacts with international Catholic organizations

The paper *Le Sémateur* (September 1920), Montréal, Canada, published the invitation by *South* for them to come to Maribor.

Zagreb, 7 October 1920 – (23 years and 10 months)

Unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation of the People's Party and Christian Socialists

It was an interesting evening. The civil Marian Congregation invited all congregations to a meeting in order to bridge the gap between the People's Party and Christian socialists, to bring together these two movements present in Catholic life in Zagreb. Under the chairmanship of Bishop Lang, Mr. Zatluka began to defend himself before anyone accused him of anything, stressing that the Christian Socialists already published their stance and that they will go to the elections as an independent party. He stressed that they are firmly on the Catholic path, but that in politics they will continue in the direction which they are pursuing now, even if requests from the highest tried to persuade them to merge with the People's Party. He also stressed that they are advocating the Croatian standpoint. Fr. Jesih replied saying that his party is led by a higher motive and that for them there is no gap between the life in the Church and outside of it. They want to introduce Christianity also into politics and do not wish to separate the two as Mr. Zatluka does, claiming that Catholics can work for opposing social and political programs. Mika Galovski stressed that today we are not only speaking about political and social programs, but about the existence of Christianity in our homeland. There must be one united Catholic party which will fight against materialism following the directives given in different papal encyclicals. One who is following *Rerum Novarum*⁴¹⁶ cannot advocate division according to the social program. Zatluka always stressed that he cannot give in. The meeting ended without unification.

*The lecture of minister Korošec to members of Domagoj
about the actual political situation in the country*

After that, Dr. Korošec⁴¹⁷ gave a lecture to the members of *Domagoj*⁴¹⁸ in the Catholic assembly room about our internal and external position; he claims that we lost Dalmatia because the delegation in Paris made a mistake by saying off-the-record that it is not interested in Istria and Gorica. From now on, our government will cultivate for several years friendship with Italy to prevent her from interfering with us on the Adriatic, and when we shall be strong enough, this tactic will change. However, in Italy irredentism is spreading, and the students are the best option to exert this kind of influence. We shall unite with the Bulgarians if our state survives and when the parties become consolidated enough (he holds that the state will survive because there are no political options threatening her existence). Already now we are in friendship with them. The small Entente has a defensive character against Hungary. It is a treaty only on paper, without signatures, because the Bohemians cannot give a real power of attorney, as their army is contaminated. Our army, he claims, is the best in Europe, the only problem being that we only have ammunition for less than three months, and no army can accumulate enough supplies unilaterally. Recently, our army penetrated into Italy on a punishment expedition and demolished everything within a 15-km range. We are now under the interest sphere of France; Germany and Austria under the sphere of England, Hungary and Romania under the Italian one. Our goal is also Istanbul. There will be no peace in Europe until Russia is consolidated.

In the internal politics, everything is confused. Our agreement with the radicals is a concubinage because they too are liberals. Of the opponents, he holds that Dr. Spalešković is the most reliable politician. In the program of Congregations, we must begin a public

⁴¹⁶ *Rerum Novarum* – encyclical of the pope Leo XIII about social issues, published in 1891. This is the first Church document in recent history, on which the social teaching of the Church is based.

⁴¹⁷ Dr. Anton KOROŠEC, Slovenian Catholic priest and politician, minister in the government of the State of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

⁴¹⁸ *Domagoj* – See note earlier, of 6 Septemeber 1920

battle because Grdić is supported by Pribičević. Likewise, we must fight against the Jews (quota clause on the universities, etc.).

Criticizes Korošec's political views

I got the impression that we Catholics don't have a politics of grand moves whose aim would be the spreading of Christ's Church. Korošec thinks like all other politicians. To him also, the Italians, Romanians, etc. are friends or enemies for political reasons, instead of trying to introduce Christ's principles into the affairs of the state: love among the states, self-discipline within every state, promotion of peace, and not contemplating already now a war with Italy, Hungary, etc.

Two currents in Catholic ranks

There are two currents in Catholic ranks: to one of them the Church is alpha and omega, and the other one wants the Christian principles to permeate the entire public life, because they are the best guarantee that it will flourish. The other of the two currents subordinates Christ to public life. The Croats are closer to the first option, Slovenians to the second. The development in Croatia is more of a personal character. Zatluka has no modern Catholic upbringing, and besides, for him religion is independent from politics.

Minister Korošec said that in Zone A in Carinthia there are statistically 500 German votes more, and we spent 35 million crowns for the agitation, corrupting the people in order to get Zone A also. Slovenians are now forcing a plebiscite, because they ran out of suits and the money with which they bribed, so that every delay means a loss of votes.

Zagreb, 13 October 1920 – (23 years and 10 months)

Impressions from a visit to Meštrović's exhibition

The Germans won the plebiscite in Carinthia.

I just came from Meštrović's exhibition. I was flooded by streams of fresh ideas. The crucified Christ, Christ and Magdalen, Christ and the Samaritan woman, Pieta, Christ drives the Jews from the temple, Madonna with child, Christ and the seducer, Japanese Madonna caryatids, etc.; everything is pure lyrics, subjectivism to the point of absurdity. Expressionism of the form. Non-anatomic forms reflect a powerful inner life. Self-taught Meštrović came into the world and the suffering of mankind became a problem for him. He, who until now was a liberal, who elaborated a religious motif only scathingly, at once saw that there is a world out there which was always involved with cardinal problems of mankind. He got involved with the Christian religion and projected into the outer forms of Christianity his own soul and this soul gave birth to new forms. There is no doubt about that.

Meštrović's relationship with God and Christianity

Meštrović is a man immensely gifted by God, but the modern subjectivism found in him a typical representative. He was in America. Maybe the religious movement of the Quakers made an impact on him. He liked their yearning for the limitless and the subjective interpretation of the Gospel. Here one sees the self-taught Meštrović. Until that moment he never knew Christianity: he didn't study e.g. the descriptions of milieu from which Christ arose and all the phases of life where he suffered, why he worked; he didn't have a living Christ in front of himself, as e.g. a Catholic when he lives the life of the liturgy. But once the exhausted, colorless liberal Meštrović got hold of the Gospel and in it Christ's passion, all those streams of ideas gushed forth at once! Meštrović sees Christ *sub specie*⁴¹⁹ of his own ego; this is not the historical Christ, but, from the ocean of these

⁴¹⁹ Latin: *sub specie* – in the light of

ephemeral strokes of our century, here and there a trait of the real historical Christ penetrates. Meštrović is a pure lyricist who gave the pieces of his soul to his Christ; the soul which, under the ruins of ideological values of the 20th century, found slowly his way to Jesus Christ.



Ivan Meštrović: Pietà

Critical review of Meštrović's works and their value

We ought to admire Meštrović for being able to express his inner life with such magnificent moves. Artists are the kind of people who, by expressing their inner life and their way to Jesus Christ, show the direction which the environment from which Meštrović emerged has taken. This is civilized western Europe which is in the state of conversion and in no way the Yugoslav milieu. Meštrović is foreign to us and God help us that our nation never gets to the stage of those nations to whose psychological disposition Meštrović's crucifix corresponds.

A woman who prays is wonderfully stylized. In the Madonnas also, pure subjectivism; the entire life of Christ, Mary with the child, etc. are all artistic conceptions of a non-religious observer on whose soul Grace is knocking all the time. Will she ever find the way into it?

Every work of art, if technically successful, is a document about the relationship of the artist with God. Therefore, the works of art can be even against God, but they reflect this relationship. This is best seen in lyric art. If e.g. the artist observes Christ's life in a completely wrong way, e.g. as Meštrović largely does, and he is able to incarnate this wrong observation of life in a single work, he is documenting his inner level. Though he might be a technical virtuoso and create a masterpiece, it is still not a real work of art, because a real work of art demands, along with the technique of expression, a correct understanding of the ideas which move the world. Therefore, we have two kinds of art: the first comprises works which brilliantly express the inner life irrespective of the correctness of the understanding of life, and the second are works which, along with formal correctness express a good understanding of life. The works of the first category are documents of the artist's relationship with God and do not fall under a proper definition of real art.

Zagreb, 14 October 1920 – (23 years and 10 months)

Materially well-off and can study the problem of the cross

Materially, maybe I will never in my whole life be as well-off as I am now. All my wishes are met. I can take a shower every evening, lie on a clean floor, get up at 5 in the morning, go to mass and frequently receive the most Holy Eucharist. I have enough food, bar meat, my suit is not torn, collars always clean. I, therefore, have everything my body demands. Therefore, it is the family which gives you the strongest means to be spiritually vigorous. I can now theoretically study the problem of the cross and may God help me to create such a strong foundation that I never succumb to the cross in practice.



Ivan Merz kneels in prayer in front of a crucifix. Work by sculptor Kuzma Kovačić in 2012. The sculpture is placed in front of the parish church of the Visitation of Mary in Banja Luka where Ivan Merz was baptized.

A TWO-YEAR STUDY IN PARIS

1920 – 1922



View of Paris

After the Croatian Jesuit, Fr. Miroslav Vanino found among the Catholic circles in France the possibility of granting a scholarship for study in Paris for several Croatian students, the leadership of the Croatian Catholic Movement in Zagreb chose three good Catholics and offered them this possibility for study, which they accepted. These students were Ivan Merz, Đuro Gračanin and Juraj Šćetinec. At the beginning of October, they arrived in Paris where they were cordially received by their benefactors who later took care of them: Msgr. Alfred Baudrillart, the rector of *Institut Catholique* and Msgr. Eugène Beaupin, secretary of the society *Comité Catholique des Amitiés Françaises à l'Etranger*.

Serbs try to obstruct the study for Croatian students

However, as soon as the Serbs who were staying in Paris heard that several Croats came to Paris to study, they wanted to obstruct in every possible way their studying. Through the consul of the State of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians they accused them of being sponsored by the Jesuits, that they were the supporters of the overthrown Austrian Emperor Karl, etc. In the end, these efforts did not bear fruit. One should bear in mind that the French government gave abundant grants to Serbia as its ally from World War I for the education of Serbian students in Paris. At the same time when these three Croatian students came to study in Paris, there were 600 students from Serbia there, all financed by the French government!

Ivan stayed two full years in France. Nearly all that time he stayed in Paris, only during the summer holidays of 1921 he went to Lourdes via Bordeaux and Toulouse.

In Paris, Ivan got accommodation, together with his colleagues, with Mrs. Michaut, a good Catholic, who tried in every way to replace the mother for Croatian students in a foreign land. Her daughter later gave a beautiful testimony about Ivan's saintly life during the time of studies.

Study of art and literature, preparation for doctoral dissertation

Ivan studied literature simultaneously at the University of Sorbonne and the *Institut Catholique* (The Catholic University).

Ivan liked the studies in Paris a lot, as is witnessed from his letter to his father from the beginning of 1921: “In France, the Catholic spirit has been kept alive for centuries, completely different than in Germany. Apart from a multitude of beautiful Gothic churches from the 12th and 13th centuries and wonderful literary works from the 17th century, the Church in contemporary France is triumphant. So, for example, the greatest modern French thinkers and writers are dedicated Catholics, something unheard of in our country. We are well informed about the situation at home and are starting now to inform the French press about the persecution of Catholics...”⁴²⁰

Ivan’s literary notebooks and his rich knowledge of French literature bear witness to his serious work. During the studies, he started gathering material for his doctoral dissertation which he subsequently wrote and defended at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb in 1923. The dissertation bears the title: “The Influence of Liturgy on French Writers.”

Medical conditions, illness of the eyes, visit to Lourdes

During the studies in Paris, Ivan had serious problems with his eyes which were very weak, to the point that he contemplated interrupting his studies. He often prayed for his eyes and his prayers were partially answered, as he mentions in his Diary. “My eyesight is somewhat better, but there is still a danger that I will be one of many millions who suffer all their lives. Of course, I would rather suffer directly for a cause, but God knows best what is good for me and for the Church.”⁴²¹ During the summer vacations in 1921 he travelled via Bordeaux and Toulouse to Lourdes and prayed to Our Lady for his eyes; he washed them in the water in Lourdes. His eyes got better to the point that he was able to continue his studies. On another place in the Diary, Ivan wrote: “Sacred Heart of Jesus, I dedicate my life to You; if it is for Your glory that I suffer and thus arrive at union with You, let it be according to Your will. I only ask You that, along with me, in Your Kingdom my parents find their place too!”⁴²²

Getting acquainted with French Catholicism

Apart from the studies, which he diligently attended, Ivan tried to acquaint himself as well as he could with French Catholic life, the activities of the Church and numerous Catholic associations. He was, therefore, in the company of the cream of the French Catholic intelligentsia and converts. He diligently attended all important Catholic events in Paris. Here he got to know Catholic Action, here the idea of the papacy as the living Christ got a final and consequential form in his soul, here he developed an unshakeable enthusiasm for the pope and for the study of Catholicism in the light of papal epistles, encyclicals and guidelines.⁴²³

On his first pilgrimage to Lourdes, he stopped in Toulouse where, together with two colleagues, he participated at the “*Semaine sociale*” (The Social Week) – a Catholic manifestation for the study and promotion of the social teaching of the Church. Ivan was thrilled by what he saw and heard, and gave a lengthy account of it in his Diary.⁴²⁴

Catholic organizations

Ivan was also dedicated to the study of Catholic organizations in France. Among all of them, he developed a particular liking for the *Croisade Eucharistique* – the Eucharistic Crusade from which he took a motto, brought it to Croatia and weaved it into the Eagles’ organization which accepted it in a shortened form: “Sacrifice – Eucharist – Apostolate.” He studied the models of other Catholic organizations and saw the important role of priests in all of them – as spiritual directors linking the organization with the hierarchy of

⁴²⁰ Letter to his father from Paris, dated 16 January 1921.

⁴²¹ *Diary*, 12 February 1921.

⁴²² *Diary*, 23 April 1921.

⁴²³ Cf. Dr. Drago ĆEPULIĆ, *Memories of Dr. Ivan Merz (in Croatian)*, Nedjelja, Zagreb, 1929, No. 5., p. 2.

⁴²⁴ *Diary*, 29 and 30 July 1921.

the Church. Ivan later insisted on this when his great apostolate was developed in Zagreb following his return from Paris.

Informing the French about bishop Mahnić

When Ivan found out about the death of bishop Mahnić, he made a note in his Diary: “Mahnić is the most remarkable personality in Yugoslav history that I know. As far as I could learn about his inner life, he comes closest to being a saint of the Catholic Church. (...) Dear Mahnić, pray for us; pray that our Movement gives birth to as many strong personalities as possible, who will work only for the holy Catholic Church!”⁴²⁵ Ivan immediately informed the French Catholic public about bishop Mahnić, publishing in a magazine an article about him in French under the title: “Life and work of a great prelate from Yugoslavia, Msgr. Antun Mahnić”⁴²⁶

Informing of the French public about the attacks on Catholics in Yugoslavia

Croatian Catholic students in Paris were very active. They held lectures in French societies and presented in French Catholic papers the attacks on Catholicism in Yugoslavia at that time. On the initiative of the Slovenian priest, Fr. Kuhar, Croatian students gathered abundant material about the cultural battles in Yugoslavia which was published in the newspaper *Libre Parole* between 3rd and 7th April 1921. This was a series of four articles that caused a true sensation in the French public.⁴²⁷ The Yugoslav side tried to obstruct the printing of these articles, but the editors responded: “If what they are saying in these articles is not true, refute it; if it is true, they have the right to defend themselves.” Ivan played a great role in the composition of these articles. Although the Yugoslav government investigated who stood behind these articles, they didn’t manage to find out. For a time, Ivan feared possible reprisals, but everything calmed down.

Plans for the future

About his future work in the field of Catholic renewal in his homeland, Ivan wrote to his friend, engineer Dragan Marošević:

“God granting, I hope that in several years we shall be able to lay strong foundations of a Catholic action among the Croats. I see only now the weak foundations of our movement, because the supernatural motivation is subordinated to the utilitarian one...”⁴²⁸

In his second letter after the pilgrimage to Lourdes, he continues very concretely: “Catholicism will not spread in our country, if there will be no workers, prayers and sufferers. This is a law in the spreading of the Kingdom of God on earth. Our movement created until now only the first type (worker) and we created in our souls the ideal of a worker for the Catholic movement. We prayed less, and suffered only when we had to. The last type is surely the pinnacle – the imitation of the consummate Savior’s sacrifice on the Cross... We need to get to know the mystery from His life: suffering for others...”⁴²⁹

The life of prayer, fasting and charity

Just before leaving for Paris, Ivan described in his Diary his ascetic way of life.⁴³⁰ This kind of life, permeated with prayer and Christian penitence Ivan continued and perfected in Paris. He went to Mass and received Communion every day. There were two churches which he frequented interchangeably: the chapel of Benedictine Sisters in

⁴²⁵ *Diary*, 28 December 1921.

⁴²⁶ *La vie et l'oeuvre d'un grand prélat de Yougo-Slavie – Mgr Antoine MAHNIC* (in French). In: *Les Amitiés catholiques françaises*, Paris, No. 2, 15 June 1921, pp. 8–10.

⁴²⁷ The joint title of these article was: *La Yougoslavie menacée de dissolution par l' action maçonnique et anticatholique* (Yugoslavia threatened with dissolution due to Freemasonic and anticatholic activity) (in French), *Libre Parole* 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 April 1921

⁴²⁸ *Letter to Dragan Marošević*, Paris, on the day of the Ascension of our Lord 1921.

⁴²⁹ *Letter to Dragan Marošević*, Paris, 18 October 1921.

⁴³⁰ *Diary*, 14 October 1920.

Monsieur Street and the central church of the Order of Lazarus with the tomb of St. Vincent de Paul on Sèvres Street. His “Paris decisions”, or Ascetic regulations as he called them himself are well known (We bring them within the diary entries where they chronologically belong.)⁴³¹ Very often he slept on the floor, ate little, observed frequent and long fasts and worked at gaining mastery of himself. Ivan’s prayer life in Paris followed a completely liturgical pattern. Apart from daily Mass, he prayed the Divine Office for priests. Along with an intensive personal spiritual life, Ivan enrolled in the Charity of St. Vincent de Paul for helping the poor. He was assigned to a poor family in Paris whom he visited, took care of and helped them in accordance with his abilities. At the beginning of July 1921, Ivan completed the spiritual exercises in the Jesuit center Manrèse in Clamart near Paris. The notes from these spiritual exercises are preserved.

On 4 November 1921, he was present at the initiation of a novice with the Benedictine Sisters. The ceremony made a deep impression on him. The same evening, he wrote a touching and inspiring description of this event in his Diary. Upon his return to Zagreb, he published articles about this event in the Catholic press.

The son converts the parents

One of great Ivan’s concerns was the religious renewal of his parents who, until then, were not practicing Catholics. Thanks to his efforts, and especially prayers and sacrifices, the desired conversion happened while he was in Paris, and later on, more fully, in Zagreb. But, it was a slow process. On 20 January 1921 Ivan noted in his Paris Diary: “After 25 years my dad received holy Communion on 12 January. My prayers to the Heart of Jesus were answered. In a letter that he sent me, I see a typical example of conversion. Grace – the supernatural moment converted him. It now remains for mom to follow his suit! Sacred Heart of Jesus help us!” And the Heart of Jesus did help!

Ivan kept a lively correspondence with his parents, especially his mother, throughout his stay in Paris. His mother couldn’t understand Ivan’s deep religious and ascetic life and wanted to steer him away from it. On the other hand, Ivan in his letters explained and justified such a way of life. From these letters to his mother we got those two famous sentences which are often quoted and in which Ivan explains his religious way of life: “Don’t you know that my life in the University in Vienna, then the war, the study and finally Lourdes fully convinced me of the truth of the Catholic faith and therefore my entire life is centered around Christ the Lord.” (Letter to his mother of 6 November 1921). The other is even more famous: “Catholic faith is my vocation in life.” (Letter to his mother of 20 October 1921)

We print these very interesting letters at the end of the Paris Diary where they belong by chronological order.

Correspondence with Dr. Maraković

Ivan conducted an intense correspondence with his former teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković. Many of these letters are preserved. They deal mostly with the topics from literature, art and finally Catholic life and work in France, about religious projects and institutions and everything else concerning the promotion of the Catholic faith. From these numerous letters of Ivan, which will be published along with the remainder of his correspondence in the special volume of Collected Works, we singled out just one dated 12 September 1921, which bears a programmatic character, and we printed it at the end of the Paris Diary.⁴³² In it Ivan lay out his plans and programs for the spiritual renewal of the Croatian people and invited his former teacher to become active in this field. It is surprising that a young man of 26, a student in Paris, thought in such a way, and lay out

⁴³¹ *Diary*, 4 November 1921.

⁴³² Letter to Dr. Lj. Maraković of 12 September 1921.

the program for the religious renewal of his nation. It is obvious that God's grace permeated Ivan deeply, preparing him for the great apostolic work which the Blessed Ivan realized after his return from Paris.

Other testimonies about Ivan's stay in Paris

Apart from his personal notes, the Diary and correspondence, we have the testimonies of direct witnesses of Ivan's saintly life in Paris, from people that were in daily contact with him. His colleague with whom Ivan shared the lodging Đuro Gračanin, published in 1933 in Sarajevo the brochure *My Memories of the Personality of Dr. Ivan Merz* (in Croatian). In it, he gives us at length his memories of the Paris days of Ivan Merz. Another colleague from the studies in Paris, Dr. Drago Čepulić, published his memories of Ivan's life and studies in Paris in an article entitled *Memories of Dr. Ivan Merz* (in Croatian), Nedjelja, Zagreb, 10 February 1929, No. 6, p. 2. The same letter was published in Ivan's first biography.⁴³³

DIARY

7 November 1920 - 4 November 1921

Paris, 7 November 1920 – (23 years and 11 months)

Description of the voyage across Slovenia and Italy to Paris

Normal life hasn't begun yet. In Ljubljana, we spoke in the editorial office of *Slovenec* with Terseglav⁴³⁴, and we travelled to Trieste with our emigres. A sad picture of Yugoslavia! A young, healthy woman from the Srem region sang in the train about Serbian glory and she is travelling never to come back.

In Italy, we met D'Annunzio's⁴³⁵ soldiers who were telling us that D'Annunzio knows how to discharge the duty of *caporal del giorno* and distribute food. In Venice, a requiem to an admiral was taking place, a man who defended Venice from the invasion of Austro-Hungarian army. We examined the church of St. Mark and the Doge's palace. Kids tried to steal things from us at the railway station... in Milan we waited long, and in Modena we had problems at the border. The ride through France was wonderful; with a fast train, we arrived in Paris in one breath. The Metro made a special impression on us at first sight, and then we wondered how the folks here are kind. In addition to that, it was unusual for us to see books displayed in the street, without anybody stealing anything. They were surprised that we came. M. Baudrillard⁴³⁶ received us warmly, but the consul Georgijević⁴³⁷ almost had us deported, claiming that we were supporters of Karl⁴³⁸ and because the Jesuits sent us. After a troublesome search, we managed to find an apartment, but it was very cold, and the food was odd (meat twice a day⁴³⁹) so that we couldn't concentrate properly.

⁴³³ Dr. Dragutin KNIEWALD, *Dr. Ivan Merz – Life and Work*, Zagreb, 1932, p. 117.

⁴³⁴ See note in text of *Diary* of 15 January 1920

⁴³⁵ Gabriele D'ANNUNZIO (1863–1938), Italian poet, dramatist, politician. One of the most pronounced members of the irredentist movement and a spiritual inspirer of Benito Mussolini. When Merz made this note, D'Annunzio was still in Rijeka which he occupied by force in 1919, and was forced to retreat in November 1920.

⁴³⁶ Msgr. Alfred H. M. BAUDRILLART (1859–1942), rector of the Catholic University (*Institut Catholique*) in Paris. Later became cardinal.

⁴³⁷ Consul of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a Serbian

⁴³⁸ KARL von HABSBURG, the deposed last Austro-Hungarian emperor and last king of Croatia, who was at that time in exile on Madeira. He was the father of the late Otto von Habsburg, a great friend of the Croats. Pope John Paul II, who got the name Karol after him, proclaimed him blessed in 2004.

⁴³⁹ Merz continued his ascetic way of life in Paris too, and eating meat twice a day was against his ascetic principles which he perfected while there.



Ivan – student in Paris. Picture from the student index

Paris, 16 November 1920 – (23 years and 11 months)

In *Cercle Montalembert* the prebendary Desgranges spoke about proportionate school distribution. In some areas teachers receive their pay and there are no pupils, whereas Catholic churches are full, without receiving any help from the state, although Catholics are paying taxes like the others. He said that Catholics will initiate a campaign to extract from the state the mandatory support for confessional schools. I hold that the French rely on the state and its help too much instead of organizing themselves completely independently, irrespective of the state, centralize Catholic press and threaten the radicals with a unified voice that they will not pay tax if the state will not be just.

I met a Catholic Englishman. It seems to me that English pupils are even less independently brought up than the French. They are very properly brought up young men, but the Catholic movement is not reflected in them. The clergy thinks instead for them and leads them, and I didn't observe a trace of a lay movement which would represent independently the viewpoint of the Church in matters not strictly within the domain of the clergy. Our Catholic movement is unified. Every member is a conscious unit in the work for the Church. We should only strive to be as closely related to the Church as possible, to have, along with the competence and awareness of the leaders, the heroism of humility and submission.

Paris, 1 December 1920 – (24 years)

Present at a lecture about the Irish question

Today there was a noisy session in *Conférence Olivant*. The lecture on the Irish question was on. The lecturer described the bloody history of Ireland through eight centuries and the last battles of the "Irish Republic". Nearly everyone applauded enthusiastically for the free Ireland. Soon, however, there was a reaction – a claim that the Irish are not a nation, but a tribe like the Provençals, that they still have no republic and that they spill their blood in vain, because they are incapable of living without the English anyway. Yet others supported the view that relations with England should not be broken on account of Ireland, because the English will be needed in the future stand-off against

Germany. One Irishman, the delegate of the Irish Republic, asked the French to show sympathy with their people who number 25 million (in America and the colonies).

The French Catholic students are in the political sense completely liberal. They make political alliances only when this alliance will yield material benefits or to be for the greater glory of the French nation. There is not a trace of a Christocentric orientation. A German is their enemy, even if he goes to the Table of the Lord every day!

Paris, 22 December 1920 – (24 years)

Participates at a political lecture about the Spanish question

In *Conférence Olivant* there was a lecture about the Spanish question. The central issue was the hatred between the French and the Spaniards. The lecturer (M. Dijon) presented the following logical chain: the French people hate the English and thereby the allies of the English – Spaniards. The French conquered Italy in 1808 and expelled the monks from the monasteries. In the last years, France was anti-Catholic and therefore the Spanish Catholics leaned toward the Germans who, on their part, supported the conservative and anti-republican parties (which, in Spain, is equivalent to counter-revolutionary). The lecturer stressed that Spain is not a dead nation, that the Spanish workers' and peasants' organizations are powerful and that the Spaniards want to establish a Catholic Peasant International. Catholics are alongside the king and the monarchy because monarchy represents order, although they are against the current military junta which wants to maneuver in Morocco. The debates were stereotypical. The Spaniards must give Tangiers over to the French because of Morocco and must become anglophiles. Politics must be realistic, not sentimental. The lecturer nicely emphasized common religious interests and is much closer to a universal concept of Catholicism than the other comrades.



Croatian students in Paris. Ivan is sitting (first to the left)

Paris, 28 December 1920 – (24 years)

Comment on the death of bishop Antun Mahnić whom he remembers with awe

Mahnić is dead. I didn't have the privilege to see him on the occasion of his seventieth anniversary, neither to stand the guard of honor with other brothers at his catafalque. Mahnić is the most impressive personality in Yugoslav history that I know of. As much as I could find out about his inner life, he is the closest to a saint of the Catholic Church among his contemporaries. What luck for the Yugoslavs to have one Mahnić, the fighter who wanted to lift the Yugoslav people into the embrace of the Trinity where he is now celebrating. Dear Mahnić, pray for us; pray that from our Movement⁴⁴⁰ many strong personalities may sprout who will work only for the most holy Catholic Church!

Paris, 16 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

I was present at a lecture organized by the *Lettres Magazine*. The magazine, which gave birth to the likes of Péguy and Jammes, wants to get the entire people interested for the problems of esthetics, wants the entire people, like in medieval ages, to be the inspirers of great works of art. This movement is analogous to *Gral* and our literary views. It emerged from the ground of the Church.

Today I was for the first time with Dr. Belić⁴⁴¹.

Paris, 20 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

Thanks to his prayers, his father converted

After twenty years, on 12 January, (silver wedding anniversary) dad received Holy Communion. My prayers to the Heart of Jesus were granted. In a letter which he wrote to me, I see a typical example of conversion. Grace, the supernatural element, converted him. I still have mother in my care! Heart of Jesus, help us!

Paris, 22 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

A lecture by Henri Ghéon about Péguy's works and his world-view

At the *Revue des jeunes*, Mr. Henri Ghéon read some excerpts from Péguy. The listeners were mostly ladies and girls fashionably dressed in silk and other. In our country, we associate such stylish dress with low morals, but among the French the literary life is going on precisely in salons like this. Mr. Ghéon read excerpts from the works of Péguy with whom he was personal friend. For me, this was the first acquaintance with this author who is a favorite among French Catholic youth. I couldn't remember the titles of all the works, but Péguy's picture is clear to me: a peasant child who sprouted and grew up among the French Christian people, who were, as is our nation to this day, full of life energy. Work was his act of liturgy. Péguy stands in opposition to Paris salon society and he severely criticizes the spiritual revolution which killed faith among the people and destroyed the very notion of people. Today's people think as their newspapers tell them to and nationality is not on its tongue as it once was. Although these social developments are painted in very strong strokes, e.g. he hates most of all the tepid atheists, because the revolutionaries have hope in a better future, and hope always conceals love, this is not where Péguy's greatness lies. When this milieu is gone, this will not interest us more than

⁴⁴⁰ Croatian Catholic Movement

⁴⁴¹ Dr. Matija Belić, a well-known Croatian lawyer from Đakovo (later moved to Zagreb). He studied for a year in Paris together with Merz. This numerous Catholic family with whom Merz was in cordial friendly relations emerged two Jesuits, Fr. Predrag and Fr. Miljenko Belić, professors at the Philosophical Faculty of the Society of Jesus in Zagreb

Labruyère's characters, but his mystical poetry will live on after him. Admittedly, in this respect all we see is a torso; the irony of Péguy who looked at the decline of France with a heart full of bitterness, sometimes disturbs us with wonderful anthems. Some, like the one where God marvels at his wonderful creation, are a wonderful complement to similar places in the Bible (the Missal, feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary). Characteristic of Péguy is his Wailing of the Mother of God. The spiritual life of the Mother of God after the death of her Son is presented in a very suggestive manner, but this Mother of God – I think – is not completely liturgical, not the real Mother of God – but a French peasant mother who lost her son.

I made acquaintance with Fr. Sertillanges⁴⁴².

Paris, 24 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

Got to know Bernoville, the Portuguese are in favor of the Catholic International

I spoke at length with Mr. Bernoville, the editor of *Lettre* and presented him our ideas about Catholic literature and the Catholic International. He was elated and gave me the address of René Johannet and handed me an invitation for a lecture about Catholic literature.

The Portuguese are also interested in the Catholic International. Two priests want to form an informative Catholic office. Generally, there is a feeling that all the nations who suffered have a greater need to lean on an international organization, than those who had a comfortable time.



The Paris University Sorbonne in which Ivan studied

Paris, 28 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

Lecture about French Catholic organizations

Prebendary Beaupin⁴⁴³ gave a lecture at the Catholic Institute⁴⁴⁴ about patronages. These are the main ideas: after the French Revolution, reverend Allemand in Marseilles

⁴⁴² Antonin-Gilbert SERTILLANGES, OP (1863–1948), a Dominican, well-known French Catholic philosopher and spiritual writer.

⁴⁴³ Prebendary Eugène BEAUPIN was the president of a Catholic association *Association des Amitiés Catholiques françaises* which provided the scholarships for Ivan Merz and other Croatian students for their studies in Paris. After Merz completed his studies and came back to Zagreb, prebendary Beaupin, as a great friend of the Croats, visited Croatia, and Merz was his guide. After Merz's death he gave a very beautiful testimony of him.

and reverend Chaminad in Bordeaux (ordinary workers – coppersmiths) gathered the youth around them and educated them. The second stage in the development was the association with Ozanam and the Brothers of St. Vincent who are an order with vows and a mission to educate the youth. The type of this order and a feeling that vows are necessary to maintain a continuity of action could be the guidepost for our action. Patronages which until now developed independently of the parish priest gradually came into his hands and within the hierarchy an organization was set up. Alongside every bishop there is now a manager who is in a way the representative or mediator between the hierarchy and this unique action. The secret of the great development of patronages is closed spiritual exercises, and especially valuable are spiritual exercises for the youth aged 12 – 14. Of course, the content of these spiritual exercises is tailored to that age group. The effect of a separate room for everyone and an inner concentration of the mind, as prebendary Beupin said, has an enormous impact on these young souls. After the spiritual exercises, these young men usually compose a short report about their impressions from the spiritual exercises. This is another interesting model for us! Patronages are, therefore, a special type of education for French Catholics and from these patronages nowadays professional schools for apprentices are being developed, in which, along with religious and moral upbringing, young men get a good professional education.



Ivan (left) with colleague Juraj Ščetinec, Mrs. Michaut and her daughter with whom he was staying in Paris

Paris, 30 January 1921 – (24 years and 1 month)

Notices God's hand in the work and prayer of Catholic organizations

I attended the last session of the *Regional Congress of French Catholic Associations*. They discussed the social orientation among the workers, agrarian organizations, study circles and the liturgical movement. The stream of life is permeating this organization and a wonderful spirit is present there. Among the members there is a harmony of souls and the debates have hardly any touch of uncontrolled emotion. The Catholic youth is more social than the high school pupils, and this came to the notice of

⁴⁴⁴ The Catholic Institute – *Institut Catholique* is the Catholic University in Paris in which Merz studied, and it was founded in 1875. At the time of its founding it couldn't be called a University because the French liberal government did not allow the Church to use the term "University" which was reserved only for the state University of Sorbonne. However, even the Sorbonne was founded by the Church in the 13th century!

some priests. Observing this huge interest of the Catholic generation in the renewal of the entire public life in Christ, I see the effects of an Energy which is active everywhere. Wherever I observed it in Austria, in our country, and also here, I admire the unity which inspires Catholic movements in all these countries. The best apology for God's action within mankind is this unifying spirit which permeates the Catholic movements of the world. This masterpiece cannot be created by any human strength or a philosophical system. This is the work of the Power which is above us and whom we seek and try to know. Let the atheists, internationals and the members of all schools of thought study the history of the Church and its present-day activity and they will see that it is the only factor which is pulling mankind forward.

Their prayer made a deep impression on me. After concluding the debates which were held on all the needs of public life, everyone turned toward the most holy Sacrament and sang in one voice *O Salutaris hostia, Mafnificat, Tantum ergo*. This enthusiastic singing was an artistic expression of the unity of their souls; the affirmation of faith in Catholic France of the 20th century! Really, the French, at least those to whom I listened today, can be proud of their clergy and their youth.

Paris, 1 February 1921 – (24 years and 2 months)

About the great names of French Christianity who criticize the "golden age" of Louis XIV

I read Bossuet⁴⁴⁵ and I am surprised to find (*Funeral Orations*) nearly the same thoughts as in Pascal (*Two Infinities*). Was Pascal listening to the sermons of Bossuet? Most probably he did, but I think that the primary inspiration came from St. Vincent who interpreted the Gospel in the Lazarists' monastery.

When we observe the century of Louis XIV, we see that his greatness does not lie in great works of art and power of the state. These kings, cardinals, all the aristocracy had very little Christianity in them and this "golden century" of refined culture found its critics among the representatives of the Church: St. Vincent, Pascal, Bossuet and others at the time of these feudal prejudices stressed the greatness of poverty, suffering, shame. What a wonderful activity of the Church who in every age shows to mankind the real purpose of life!

Paris, 12 February 1921 – (24 years and 2 months)

Spiritual suffering, crisis almost to the point of despair. All because of the eyes. I already thought that I might have to interrupt my studies; thoughts of my parents, of our people, tortured me. Thank God, the sight improved somewhat, but it is possible that I will be among the millions who suffer all their life. Of course, I would rather suffer directly for the idea, but God knows best what is better for the Church and for me. If, therefore, all the plans, all my work so far proves seemingly in vain, the Church will grow nevertheless and Christ will have his second coming. One man more or less – only let this man fulfil the will of God in these moments.

The lectures organized by the magazine *Lettres* are wonderful. Today, the speaker was Mr. Storez, the founder of *Arche*, and the topic was *cathedral – the mirror of the world*. He sketched an ideal picture of Middle Ages when art was a science, and the whole universe a masterpiece of the Arch-Artist. The man is only a word in this great symphony. Symbols, numbers play a great role. 3 (*Trinitas*) + 4 (elements – body) = 7, the human number. The relationship of the soul and the body, 3 x 4 = 12 apostles. With a wonderful logic, the Middle Ages adorned these symbols. Trinitas, angels, Christ can be presented naked, but man never. Animals, plants, all have their significance in this world-view. *Art*

⁴⁴⁵ Jacques-Bénigne BOSSUET (1627–1704), French bishop, theologian, spiritual writer, great orator and preacher of his time.

pour art doesn't exist because nature's own love is an expression of one idea, and is connected with the rest of the macrocosm.

Communists, e.g. (see *Le Journal du peuple*, of 28 January 1921 and 7 February 1921) already stress that art must assume a social character, that liberalism, the isolation of every individual, is lethal for art itself. They, of course, demand dictatorship, but with their views they get close to our viewpoint. They condemn that a work is created in order to be placed in a museum but want it to be the decoration of a house, cemetery, etc. The last step in this interpretation would be the cathedral in which all the arts work together. Cathedral is, therefore, *abrégé du monde*.⁴⁴⁶ Macrocosm, *Trinitas, creatio*.

Jesus Christ, please heal my eyes!



The cathedral Notre Dame in Paris

Paris, St. George's Day, 23 April 1921 – (24 years and 4 months)

Problems with the eyes, faces suffering, dedicates his life to the Heart of Jesus

My pain continues and therefore I wrote almost nothing. In the past period, I thank Jesus Christ for being able, during Lent, to plunge into the ocean of pain of His Heart and for having lived in such a close relationship with Him. Besides, I translated the Way of the Cross by Paul Claudel⁴⁴⁷ and I think that every Catholic poet should write one Way of the Cross so that we might judge his greatness as man.

Due to this disease of the eyes, I couldn't dedicate myself to the study of Catholic literature as I would like to, and due to inner distraction, I didn't learn French which I studied in parallel.

Heart of Jesus, I dedicate my life to you; if is for Your glory that I suffer and thus come to You, let Your will be done, and please, let my parents be alongside me in Your kingdom.

⁴⁴⁶ French: *abrégé du monde* – essence of the world

⁴⁴⁷ Merz's manuscript with the Croatian translation of the Way of the Cross by the French writer Paul Claudel, is kept in his Archive in Zagreb. This translation was published by *Glas Koncila* in 2005 as a separate edition.

Engaged in the promotion of the truth about the persecution of Catholics in Yugoslavia

The work of our society is mostly journalistic. On the initiative of Fr. Kuhar we prepared a huge amount of material about the cultural battle in Yugoslavia and the *Libre Parole* published four articles on this topic between the 4th and 7th of April 1921. These articles caused a sensation with the French public. Our delegation in Paris intervened with the French government to stop the publication of these articles, but the response was: if what these articles say is not true, deny it, if it is, they have the right to defend themselves. In addition, *La Croix* in its issue of 21 April published an article about Yugoslavia, and today we had demonstrations. Apparently, the French Catholics support us with all their might.

Visits various Catholic societies and their meetings, comments on the lectures

From the 14th until the 17th of April I participated in the congress of the *Catholic Union of International Students* where, among other things, they debated about Ireland. The viewpoint which the Catholics must assume, because the majority of English Catholics think the same, is that Ireland should be granted the right to their nation; as Ireland wants to be free, it has the right to freedom from under England's yoke.

Such meetings are good because in such a way the Catholics of opposing national and other tendencies meet together and forge a unified directive of action for the future. But, I think that a sound international Catholic work will not be possible as long as the Germans are banned from cooperating. I think that God our Lord in that case withdraws his blessing to all these international Catholic actions. In order for an idea to succeed, sacrifice is required! The motto of our Lord Jesus Christ, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:21), is so great that it might almost be necessary to establish an order which would dedicate itself to befriending French Catholics with the German ones. Heart of Jesus, bless the French-German love!

Gave a lecture about Catholic organizations as a foundation of Republica Christiana

On 17th April I gave my first speech in French in the Catholic trade union in rue Cadet 5, in the name of foreign students. My thesis was that Catholic confessional organizations are the cells from which a *Republica Christiana* should eventually develop. Today there was a celebration of the *Catholic Organization of French Youth* in which Šćetinec very nicely presented our Movement⁴⁴⁸. Dr. Dvornik, with much cosmetic cream, sketched the battles of Catholics in Czechoslovakia, and the Irishman, Mr. Walsh, as always, presented with passion the religious war of contemporary Ireland where the English burn and destroy. He mentioned that the Protestants who are among the Sinuteniers respect Catholicism, that they often pray the rosary together with the Catholics. Mr. Nerrero from Spain presented in a temperamental manner how Spain has lost all its colonies, but remained rich, because it preserved its faith.

Criticism of the liberal professors at the Sorbonne

Msgr. Baudrillart⁴⁴⁹, having commended the Spanish civilization which spread Catholicism and Latin culture throughout America, warns the French that they mustn't be too proud of themselves, but must get to know other nationalities as well. He tells of a shameful case at the Sorbonne: today they declared the president of the Chinese Republic honorary doctor of the Sorbonne. On the occasion of this ceremony, the rapprochement of these civilizations was stressed and for the greatness of the West they mentioned Darwin, while the Chinese stressed the superiority of Eastern culture characterized by the dominance of the spirit over the body. So, the professors at the Sorbonne never even mentioned Christianity, which is the most significant mark of Western culture. In his speech, he protested against the Serbs who want to subjugate Croats and their faith.

⁴⁴⁸ Croatian Catholic Movement

⁴⁴⁹ Rector of the Catholic University (*Institut catholique*) in Paris

The Italian journalist Ruso said that they will organize a manifestation in the Italian parliament against the persecution of Catholicism in Yugoslavia.

Paris, 14 May 1921– (24 years and 5 months)

Yugoslav government persecutes Croatian students in Paris

The feast of St. Joanne d' Arc in Orleans was beautiful. A brightly lit cathedral, clergy, the army... They gave us a nice reception in the editorial offices of the magazine *Libre Parole*. Our government is searching for us because of the articles in *Libre Parole* and yesterday a certain Count Polocki visited us, probably with the intention of finding out who was the author of the articles.

Toulouse, 27 July 1921 – (24 years and 7 months)

Travelling to Lourdes, stopover in Bordeaux

In the Paris – Bordeaux train we met two Jesuits – theology students, originally from Canada. They spoke about the strong religious life in Canada, about the fertility of the French nationality in Canada, and other things. In Bordeaux, Šćetinec, Gračanin and I examined the ship *Asie* and visited all the possible Catholic organizations. In Arcachon we were present at a meeting of the Avant-garde, the members of the French Catholic youth. The closeness of Lourdes is felt everywhere; one member of this youth organization was miraculously healed (he had, I think, tuberculosis in his leg) and is now playing football. On the coast, they showed me a lady in white who was healed from the same condition. I saw for the first time the light-blue Atlantic Ocean, whose waves were rushing toward the coast, foaming and competing with each other. This endless life, this movement of the immeasurable is like an image of the Holy Spirit who is also endless, eternal, immeasurable.

We arrived in Toulouse at night, wandered along the narrow streets in moonlight, one might call it a Bosnian night, and finally we hit the door-knocker and a large medieval door opened.

Here I liked the most the big, heavy and penitential Romanic church of St. Sernin where they keep the head of St. Thomas. It is full of other relics as well, including a piece of wood from the Holy Cross, part of Virgin Mary's dress and other things.

Participating at the Social Week in Toulouse

Social Week (*semaine sociale*). Although its character is too expert for me to understand, the overall impression is magnificent. There were the leaders of Catholic France and Belgium. Besides E. Duthoil, Ponin, the Jesuit Lerolle, there were the Dominican Père Rütten, the leader of Belgian workers' organizations, and Max Thurmann, the author of the book *The Church and Social Economy*.

The best proof of the supernatural atmosphere which reigns everywhere is that the president of the congress received Holy Communion daily.

They discussed the injustice in economic relations and examined the causes of social injustice in detail. Thus, the directives for social work in the next year are being created. So, the Social Week assumed the character of a travelling university.

In the Catholic University, which is, as everywhere, the focus of the Catholic life of a city, everything is centralized. Meals in the garden of the Catholic University are interesting. Sitting at long tables there are several hundred male and female, priestly and lay persons.⁴⁵⁰ As is the French custom, long toasts are held in which the French flatter

⁴⁵⁰ With his colleagues, J. Šćetinec and Đ. Gračanin, Merz took part in these meals. In one such meal he was sitting next to a 16-year old boy named Joseph de Finance. They had a cordial conversation, and Merz gave him his visiting card which Joseph kept for a long time. This young man later became a Jesuit and then a well-known professor of philosophy on the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Fr. J. de Finance told

themselves. Two speeches were most interesting for me: one French missionary from China complained that all of the Chinese youth coming into France fall into the hands of the Protestants or Bolsheviks. He pleaded with the French youth to take a more active stance toward the Chinese who come to France. An inspiration of sanctity shone forth from the entire speech. Father Rütten asked the French to pay greater attention to the workers. He claimed that a worker can be won over only by means of another worker (apostolate of the workers directed at workers). Every priest must educate several workers who will then spread the ideas of Christian socialism among their comrades. He then went on to demand the establishment of a daily Catholic workers' paper because workers cannot believe the Catholic press if it is bourgeois. Only the worker can hit the right vein with other workers.

Toulouse, 29 July 1921 – (24 years and 7 months)

Visit to a Jesuit School of Agronomy

In Panpan we visited the School of Agronomy which is managed by the Jesuits. Their aim is to educate experts who will, with their professional authority, carry out a re-Christianization of the French village. They educate Christian workers and Christian engineers.

Toulouse, 30 July 1921 – (24 years and 7 months)

Comment on the lectures on Social Week

General Castelnau yesterday gave an interesting lecture in the Jacobin hall (formerly a Dominican church). I especially liked his down-to-earth democratic approach and his Christian behavior (he kissed the ring on the cardinal's hand!). He spoke about seven cardinal sins and applied them to the history of different nations. He was using the words *armed nation* for defensive reason against the Prussians. There was no hatred in his lecture. What a difference compared to Austrian generals who were not able to speak in such a tone in front of the people! Mr. Las Casas gave an interesting overview about the victory of Christian social ideas in the French parliament; some legal proposals that were submitted by Catholic deputies were accepted. It is a characteristic, namely, of French Catholics that they love their state and rejoice over every success of that state as a success of the people.

I was sad listening to the cardinal's speech, full of hatred against the Germans. God, forgive us sinners and resurrect the apostles who will sacrifice themselves for Christian unity!

The lecture of Mr. Goyan (read by a professor from Lille) was wonderful: it presented the wonderful system of Christian social mystics and the communion of saints. He presented all the poetry which is reflected from soul to soul in three parts of the Church.

Here I understood the power of Christian prayer. They burdened me with a host of prayers to say in Lourdes for the people whom I hardly know: from P. Desbutquois and *Action Populaire* all the way to an unknown Carmelite nun. I also met the type of a French Catholic girl (Miss Fayol). They are full of supernatural fervor. It is hard to part from such people. They revealed to me that among them there were Serbian women who had a liking for the Catholics. A certain Ruža Kuzmanović converted and has the plan to open a children's clinic in Belgrade and invite the French Sisters of Mercy. Praise be to God and his holy name!

this anecdote to the postulator Fr. Božidar Nagy, SJ, to whom Fr. de Finance was a professor during his studies in Rome. Another Croatian Jesuit, Fr. Anto Pavlović, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the philosophy of Fr. J. de Finance and defended it at Gregorian University in 2009.

At Fr. Bessières' place, I leafed through the *Apostolate of Prayer* and he explained to me the children's Eucharistic crusade (*Croisade eucharistique*). Seven-year old children begin with ascetics and Christian propaganda among their comrades. A truly magnificent work! Belgians promised me that they will try to find a place for our workers in their organizations.

ON A PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

Ivan made no notes in his Diary of his experiences in Lourdes where he went accompanied by two of his friends, Đuro Gračanin and Juraj Ščetinec after participating at the Social Week in Toulouse.

However, he left us his impressions of this first pilgrimage to Lourdes in three places. This is firstly the article "Two Miracles in Lourdes" (in Croatian) which he sent while still in Lourdes to the newspaper Narodna Politika in Zagreb where it was published on 20 August 1921. Then, there are two letters, one to Dr. Lj. Maraković and the other to his friend Dragan Marošević. We publish all three documents in chronological order, as they were written. In them we see the impact which Lourdes had on Ivan, strengthening his faith, and especially deepening his devoutness to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In a letter to his mother from Paris the same year Ivan included the following sentence: "You know that my life at the University in Vienna, then the war, study and finally Lourdes completely convinced me in the truthfulness of the Catholic faith, and therefore, all my life is centered around Christ our Lord" (from Paris on 20 October 1921).

Although these three documents are not diary entries, we decided to publish them here to fill a void in his Diary from that period; also, these documents reveal his deep spiritual experience of Lourdes which was so important for his future religious and apostolic work.

Lourdes, 4 August 1921 – (24 years and 8 months)

The article Two Miracles in Lourdes – an experience of Lourdes

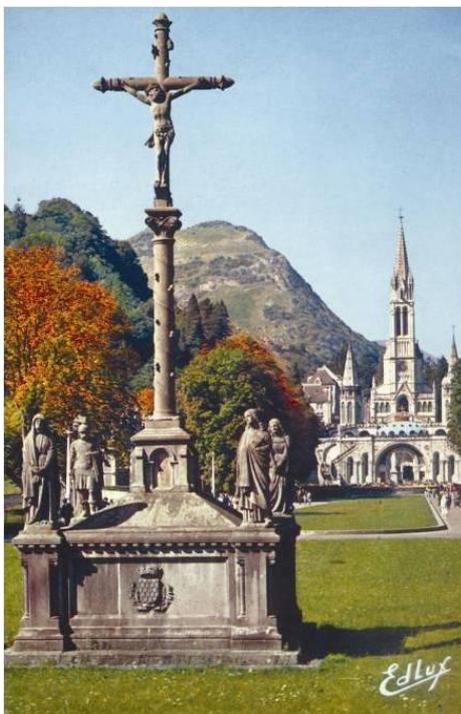
From this article published by the newspaper Narodna politika (Zagreb, 20 August 1921, No. 187, pp. 2-3) we bring here the beginning and the end. We leave out the direct descriptions of two miraculous cures. The article was published again in full in the 2nd volume of Collected Works of Ivan Merz (Zagreb, 2011, pp. 285-288). This article was written while he was still in Lourdes and in it we find those first, direct, fresh impressions which Ivan had of Lourdes and its message to the world.

Incredible events are still happening in Lourdes. Many thousands of devotees from all parts of the world swarm the streets and pray the rosary with open arms in front of the well-known cave. When the night descends from the Pyrenees, long processions with lit candles in their hands walk from the Masabielle cave along the Gava stream, singing Ave Maria whose beautiful melody rises to the Lady of Lourdes. But the most touching moment is the procession of the Most Holy Sacrament. At 5 p.m. many hundreds of patients – the number depends on the size of the pilgrimages – lying on stretchers or in wheelchairs, wait upon the Most Holy Sacrament in a large area in front of the church of the Holy Rosary. While the procession with the Most Holy Sacrament moves from the cave, the multitude prays the rosary aloud in all the languages of the world. Then the priest goes with the Most Holy Sacrament from patient to patient, while in front of the church the voice of another priest resonates:

Lord, we bow down to You! And thousands of voices respond: Lord, we bow down to You! Then it continues: Lord, we trust in You! Lord, we love You! Hosanna, hosanna

to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! You are Christ, the Son of the living God, etc.

Listening to the prayers and rejoicing of those thousands of voices, unquestionably every spectator is permeated by some special feeling. The images that occurred 1900 years ago are repeated here reminiscing of our Savior who walked the streets of Jerusalem, healing the sick. We arrived in Lourdes unfortunately four days after two great miracles happened. We, therefore, quote from the report published in *La Croix de Lourdes* of 31 July 1921.



Lourdes

Here follows a detailed description of two miraculous cures whose documentation Merz sent together with the article to the editors of Narodna politika. The article ends with these words:

The events at Lourdes force every spectator to reflect. As they occur publicly – in front of thousands of spectators – and as every physician is completely free to examine and check out every cure, a large number of non-believers are converted to the Catholic faith.

Lourdes, which was a neglected village 66 years ago, is now a beautiful town, among others, full of monasteries. Everything reminds us of Bernardette Soubirous, the girl to whom the Blessed Virgin appeared 18 times. When, among other things, you visit the monastery, “The Orphanage of the Sisters of Nevers,” you will be cordially greeted by a nun, Bernardette’s friend, who will give you mementos of her.

The experiences at Lourdes are a living truth as everyone can verify with his own eyes. They are a mighty warning to mankind to convert to the real and great God. The guiding idea of these moving events of the disbelieving twentieth century seems to be already pronounced in Zacharias’ eulogy. The miracles at Lourdes should “shine on those living in the darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet onto the path of peace” (Luke 1:79).

Paris, The Most Holy Name of Mary,
12 September 1921 – (24 years and 9 months)

*From the letter to Dr. Lj. Maraković – a personal experience of Lourdes
and a prayer to the Blessed Virgin*

On the feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary, on 12 September 1921, Ivan sent to his teacher Dr. Lj. Maraković from Paris a very strong, programmatic letter which we publish in full at the end of his Diary from the Paris period. Here we quote only the part relating to his experience of Lourdes:

I would like to tell you something more about pilgrimages. In Lourdes I experienced great manifestations. Pilgrimages are the best schools of prayer. I feel free to say that in Lourdes I prayed genuinely for the first time to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Before Lourdes, my prayer to the Blessed Virgin was a contemplation of a phantom of my phantasy. I admit I simply didn't feel the meaning of the greatness of the Mother of God, a woman who was predestined from the beginning to be the bearer of the One who is the creator of the entire universe, etc. And in Lourdes I heard thousands praying aloud and every sound and every movement of an individual believer – this being the expression of his or her religious life – suggested to me his or her religious awareness of the Blessed Virgin.

Imagine several thousand voices, movements, smells and colors and everything speaks about the Blessed Virgin Mary. Is it odd that her harmony, her formal beauty, her sweet fragrance, her immense greatness and goodness assumes in our heart immeasurable contours and builds in us the image of the real Madonna... And along with that you hear penetrating voices of the patients praying for healing, and miracles do happen – and you remain crushed under the greatness of the One on whom the eternal salvation of all the nations depends! In the evening when you join the procession holding a lit candle in your hands and look upon these thousands of candles playing in the wind – none differing from one another – you feel that there is no difference between people, classes, that in this valley of tears we are all the children of the same Mother and that the only purpose of life is to work for our salvation without human considerations and likewise for the salvation of those close to us and thus arrive at our eternal destination for which we were created. This is a very narrow sketch of what I've been through and I think we ought to organize pilgrimages to Marija Bistrica or other shrines where we shall pray together to the Blessed Virgin. I am sure these prayers will be of use even for our earthly life because "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33).

Paris, St. Luke, the physician,
18 October 1921 – (24 years and 10 months)

A letter to a friend Dragan Marošević – encounter with the supernatural world

One month after writing to his teacher Dr. Maraković, Ivan wrote on 18 October to his sick friend Dragan Marošević with whom he studied together in Vienna. Although two and a half months have passed since his pilgrimage to Lourdes, the impressions are still very deep, proving his genuine encounter with the supernatural world.

Dear Dragan,

You gladdened me with your swift response. (...) I am very sorry for not having written to you from Lourdes, because it will be hard now to reproduce all the impressions.

Surely you know those scenes from the Gospel when our Savior sent the demons into the pigs which rushed into the lake and drowned. People became afraid and asked Jesus to leave their region. Likewise, people were overcome by fear when our Lord healed the only son. This phenomenon seems to manifest always when a supernatural Power begins to act (It often happened on the front!). The same is in Lourdes: only the first

impression is that “She” is there, the Mother of God who is greater and more powerful and more beautiful and stronger than all those gigantic peaks of the Pyrenees which surround Lourdes. She resides there in a special way and I think that all who are there, even non-believers, must have this feeling that she is there. (...) So, you find yourself in Lourdes beside Her: she lifts her head above the Pyrenees, holds God in her arms – imagine God. (...) Therefore, She stands in front of you – this is a real feeling which you cannot shake off, and thousands of believers, at night (each with a lit candle), go uphill along the serpentine and sing without stopping Ave, Ave, Ave Maria. Every candle which shimmers is one soul which will go to Her today, tomorrow or in a year. (Oh, one thinks there will that moment come soon, because really there is a foretaste of Heaven in the air). This is the poetic part.

During the day hundreds (many hundreds) of patients lie on the stretchers, the multitude prays the rosary aloud with open arms, and Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament goes from patient to patient, leans toward each one of them and blesses them. In the meantime, one priest shouts aloud: Lord we love you, Lord we bow to you, let me see you, etc. Occasionally there is a shout: “I am healed”... I came two days after miracles happened and went away also several days before new miracles occurred. This year very many people were healed. In that atmosphere one is easily overcome by fear, just like those people from the Gospel.

Yes, in Lourdes I learned what the Rosary is, and since then it is my second-best friend. Before I came to Lourdes, I admit, there was a lingering doubt at the bottom of my mind, some feeling that I might be praying to a phantom of my imagination!? I prayed, of course, because to stop praying would mean not to believe in the Blessed Virgin Mary. And where do we go from there? Turn away from Catholicism, and everything around you is dark and ugly. Therefore, Lourdes added the element of feeling to my rational faith...

I speak of myself, because I hold that our whole Movement⁴⁵¹ – and I am a child of this movement, is religiously very rationalistic. For the tiniest thing, they need an apology to convince them. There is a lack of that contact from heart to heart, and contact with the Blessed Virgin Mary, that blind childlike love which believes, and doesn't seek a thousand arguments for this faith.

This letter, admittedly, is a collection of fragments, but I know that you like to meditate. Therefore, I hold that you will complete with your own power if I left out something. But, aren't you yourself a bit rationalistic? The child of our Movement?! I know it is difficult to suffer, but some people have the vocation of suffering. We are a body of Christ and on this body the roles are distributed. Some must suffer to remove the wrath of God which should descend upon us. Huysmans would call these chosen souls *mystical lightning rods*. Did you ever consider suffering for our movement? Did you dedicate your pain to the Lord Jesus for the movement? Catholicism will not spread in our country unless there will be workers, those who pray and sufferers. This is a law in the spreading of the Kingdom of God on earth. Our movement has created so far only the first type (worker) and we created in our souls the ideal of the Worker for the Catholic movement. We prayed a bit less, and suffered only when we had to. The last type is surely the pinnacle – imitation of the complete Sacrifice of the Savior on the Cross – and I see in our movement already a large number of such potential sufferers. As there is no accident, I hold that it is the plan of Providence for us to realize this mystery from His life; to suffer for others.

It is true that it is easy to speak about the Cross, and it is difficult to carry it. Surely you must go on praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary with all your force, if possible meditate on the entire rosary every day. At the sorrowful mystery “who bore the heavy cross for us” you can observe the entire Way of the Cross and you must promise her

⁴⁵¹ Croatian Catholic Movement whose members were both Ivan Merz and his friend Dragan Marošević.

something: e.g. that for the rest of your life you will recite the rosary once daily, or something else. In this promise, it is most important that it is a real obligation and that until the end of your life you will remain in Her service. Maybe She is asking precisely this decision of you because she knows that within a shorter time frame you might become negligent, whereas such a promise disciplines a man, like a regulation, in his religious life.

This is my opinion. I don't know if I rightly guessed your state of mind, but I hold that a regular and consequent meditation is the only means for a man not to lose balance here on earth and from day to day (future, it is nothing compared to eternity!) rejoice with Christ or suffer with Him. (...)

With love and prayers, yours

Ivan

Continuation of the Paris Diary

Paris, 4 November 1921 – (24 years and 11 months)

Dressing of a novice in a monastery of Benedictine nuns

I visited the monastery of Benedictine nuns⁴⁵² on the occasion of the dressing of a novice. The liturgy was magnificent: the impression as if the girls are going under the guillotine, into death. They die to the world and become the strings which will sing to the glory of God for all eternity. They will burn like fire and enter like the wise virgins with lit lamps into the marital chamber of the Betrothed.



*Marie Denise Chevillotte,
a general's daughter, before entry into the
Benedictine monastery in 1921*

I am a slave of God. The result of suffering (eyes) is that I formulated the directive for life⁴⁵³ and I pray the whole rosary daily. If my eyes heal, and I pass my exams, and if

⁴⁵² Monastery of the Benedictine nuns in Monsieur Street in Paris

⁴⁵³ These are Merz's well-known *Paris decisions*, i.e. *The Ascetic regulations* according to which he strived to live a deeper Christian life. The original document with these decisions is preserved and we publish them where they fit chronologically, in the pages which follow.

there will be no external impediments, I will join the Jesuits (if they accept me). One ought to forget the world and concentrate all the forces in the work for Jesus. To forget one's friends, plans, everything – in a way to vanish from the face of the earth, yes, this is my intention – to burn myself out and enter with as many other souls as possible that sublime place where the Father, Son, Blessed Virgin Mary in the Holy Spirit, apostles, martyrs, angels, virgins, Thomas, Mahnić, Rogulja, all those innumerable worlds of the Apocalypse are waiting for us.

When in ancient times they sacrificed people (Iphigenia) in order to placate the Deity, those present were overcome by horror. The young, wise Benedictine is entering into a prison never to emerge from it again. She has crossed the first threshold of death which leads to heaven.

Old pagan ceremonies had an intuition of grand mysteries, Christianity explicated them.

The daughter of a general leaves the world, dressed as a white fiancée, in order not to drown. Fasting, eating standing up, getting up in the dead of the night, staying in a cold room, putting the cross on her back in order to save the pagan Babylon, thousands of prostitutes and lechers.

God, you are great, you pour supernatural force into tiny souls and put to shame members of science, academicians, politicians who deliver mighty speeches, but are not prepared to sacrifice the smallest of their bodily comfort.

Yes, the grain must be thrown into the earth and die there if it wants to bear fruit.

The Queen for Virgins, pour the oil of sanctity into her soul and her body. Let the fragrance of the burning sacrifice fill the earth with its fumes.

Today a man must read a library, and people are not aware that the Church possesses greater dramatic poetry than all the possible Sophocleses and Shakespeares.

The ceremony, apart from the beauty of the text, has this advantage over worldly dramatic poetry, in that the latter imitates something that is past, while in liturgy we are witnessing the drama itself.

Oh, how great are the souls which renounce life completely! Adam's seed sinned by disobeying God and became the slave of the flesh which is below the man. Only humility re-establishes the disturbed order: not wanting anything for oneself, destroying in oneself everything that separates us from God, trying to forget oneself completely – this is the only counter-weight of Adam's sin by which he wanted to become equal to God.

Oh, how terribly sorrowful human life is! How many hundreds of thousands of virgins – beautiful, healthy and wise – left behind them the life, happiness, parents, to be enclosed in a monastery and to forget their own name. Today, this general's daughter like those hundreds of thousands leaves her father, decorated with all kinds of medals, never to emerge from the walls of Monsieur Street⁴⁵⁴.

What was she thinking? The mystery of life must have tortured her long. Finally, she realized that it is the best, as this life is only a foreplay, to begin as soon as possible, even with great pains, the life that will last forever. At home, she could barely wait to begin a regular religious life because all the numerous obligations were distracting her from it. Today, when she crossed the threshold of the monastery, what was she thinking? That now the real preparation for the other life will begin. Wasn't she overcome by fear that she might get used to monastic life and turn the whole affair into a habit? Oh yes, she will have to keep herself awake all the time, to be always ready for the arrival of the Betrothed. This life will have to become so repugnant to her, that she will yearn to cross the other threshold which leads into the monastery of Heaven.

My God, let the paganism in which we live vanish forever.

⁴⁵⁴ The street in Paris in which the monastery of Benedictine nuns was situated with a chapel in which the ceremony of entry of the Benedictine novice into the monastery took place.



Interior of the monastery of Benedictine nuns in Paris

Brief comment on the description of the dressing of the Benedictine novice



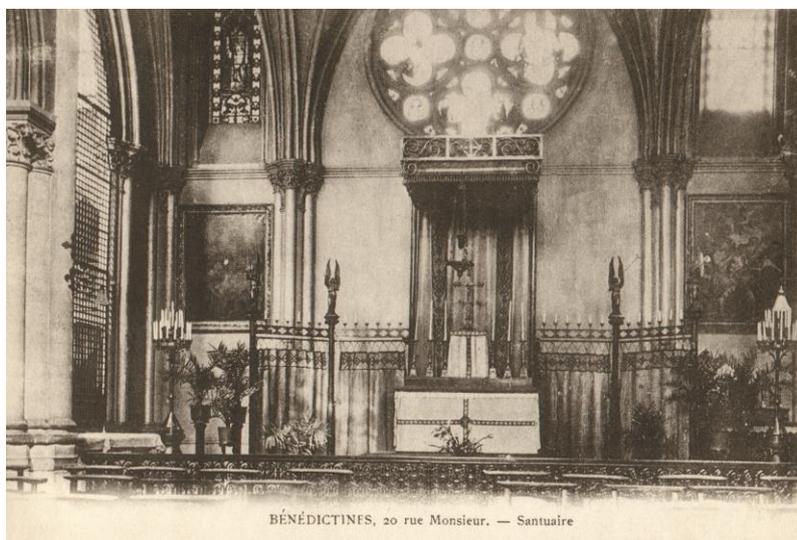
Ivan Merz never found out the name of this nun nor did he ever inquire about her afterwards. Under the impression of the ceremony of dressing he translated and published in Croatian Catholic press the entire ecclesiastical ritual of the dressing of novices in the monasteries of Benedictine nuns. Later he published his description of this ritual as he saw it in Paris as a separate article. Merz ended his earthly life without even finding out what happened to this nun.

**Sister Marie Denise Chevillotte, Benedictine nun
on whose initiation ceremony in 1921 Ivan was present.
Photo from 1979**

In his Diary, Ivan left only three pieces of information: that the father of this young novice was a French general, that her dressing took place on 4 November 1921 and that it occurred in the Benedictine monastery in Monsieur Street in Paris.

On the basis of this information the postulator for his canonization, Fr. Božidar Nagy, SJ, managed to find this nun in 1979 in their monastery, but in Vauhallan near Paris where the monastic community had relocated in the meantime. On this occasion her name became known. Her name was Marie Denise Chevillotte. Her life unwound exactly as Ivan had predicted on the day of her dressing. She had never heard of Ivan Merz before and was very surprised when the postulator brought her the translation of the description of her dressing, as it was experienced by a young Croatian student at that time.

Sister Marie Denise lived to an old age. She died on 24 October 1991 in her 90th year, ten days before the 70th anniversary of her entry into the monastery. Postulator Fr. Božidar Nagy was present at her funeral, on the occasion of her entry “into the monastery of Heaven”. On that occasion, the abbess of the monastery donated for the museum of Ivan Merz a cross and rosary of Sister Marie Denise where they are kept as a valuable testimony of a life dedicated to God with whom the Blessed Ivan Merz was spiritually connected.



Chapel in the monastery of Benedictine nuns in Paris to which Ivan often came to Mass and in which he was present at the initiation ceremony of a novice.

All documentation about the religious life of Sister Marie Denise Chevillotte was published in the Postulation Bulletin (in Croatian) Ivan Merz, No. 1-2, 1979/1980, No. 1-2 1991, No. 1-2, 1992

Paris, 4 November 1921 – (24 years and 11 months)

Ascetic regulations – directives for life

In his Diary of 4 November 1921, Merz also mentions how he drafted the directives for life, i.e. decisions for a more perfect Christian life, directed towards sanctity. Although he doesn't mention them in his Diary, these decisions are preserved and are kept in his Archive. They were written in Paris with his own hand on a sheet of paper. He entitled them Ascetic regulations, but they are better known as the Paris decisions. We publish them here because they thematically fit into this time-frame.

Ascetic regulations

1. Lie on a hard bunk.
2. Wash the whole body once a day in cold water.
3. Skip breakfast.
4. On Friday feel hunger.
5. Often stop eating just when the food pleases you most.
6. Do physical exercises every day whatever the circumstances.
7. Never speak about yourself.
8. Eat only lunch and dinner.

PARIS CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN IVAN MERZ AND HIS PARENTS IN 1921

In the Paris period of Merz's life we have relatively few diary entries; the last one is dated 4 November 1921. However, from that period we have an abundant correspondence with his parents, and especially with Dr. Lj. Maraković. In the correspondence with Dr. Maraković we can trace Ivan's external activities regarding studies and exploring French Catholic life, his visits to important Church dignitaries and Catholic institutions.

By contrast to previous years, in his letters to the parents we can take a glimpse into his spirituality, his understanding of life and his life vocation in the light of the Catholic faith. In Paris Ivan lived even more intensively a spiritual life filled with ascetic and penitential elements. His parents, especially his mother, couldn't understand it and a very interesting exchange of letters between mother and son ensued. Ivan wanted his parents to begin living a deeper Christian life, and this was his great preoccupation. With his father, he succeeded, through letters and persuasion, but most of all prayer, as is seen in their correspondence. But his mother was a harder nut to crack. With her, Ivan succeeded only upon his return to Zagreb. In the meantime, his mother wanted to convince Ivan to live a "normal" life, to use his time in Paris for worldly things, etc. It is visible from Ivan's letters how deeply he penetrated into Christian spirituality and started his ascent towards sanctity. We publish here Ivan's letters almost in full (only the irrelevant details are left out), while from the letters of his father, and especially his mother we quote a few passages which illustrate a great difference between mother and son in the understanding of life.

Correspondence with the father – father returns to God

After the New Year of 1921 Ivan wrote to his father: "Your letter brought me greater joy than any one before. This is for the first time that you openly and clearly laid out your most secret thoughts, your struggles and inner striving. I will try to link my meditations to your thoughts. You say that sometimes you feel a yearning in yourself to get out of yourself... This yearning is a characteristic of our century. I visit here various societies which are founded on differing world-views and everywhere I feel a great struggle and searching of souls... There is one God who constantly acts upon human souls. In every human soul, there is a striving for something great: someone thirsts for glory, another for great deeds, yet another tries to achieve something great, but feels he will not succeed and becomes a pessimist... In every person, there is the striving to become God in a way. You won't, my dear father, find any philosophical system which could emphasize this thought as wonderfully as Christianity is doing and claiming that the striving and goal of every man is to become a child of God. This striving of Yours, Your struggle and Your discontent, it is all a subconscious yearning for God."

When his father responded to this letter, Ivan wrote again from Paris on 21 January 1921: "My dear father! Your letter of 15 January 1921 brought me great joy and I thank God for having granted my incessant prayers and given you the grace of the holy faith. I am deeply convinced that the events surrounding your silver wedding anniversary were no accident, but were prepared by Providence which immeasurably loves its creation. Your letter is so strong that it could find place in the recent literature of confessions of modern converts as a proof of the truthfulness of Christianity. This, what you have been through, is a way trodden by all converts from St. Augustine to Benson and Brunetière. I hope that the love which binds us together will now become even deeper and greater and that we shall, after the battle which we must fight in this life and in eternity, be united in God... It is natural that what we have received we must now preserve. I am sure that you will have to win many battles in your soul. But the greatest victory is already here – the holy faith

and your ascent will be successful with a good and strong will. The best means to challenge the power of Christianity is to let Christ's life as the Gospel and liturgy present it act upon us." (...)

From Paris Ivan wrote to his father on 16 March 1921: "I am curious to know how your spiritual life, and mother's too, is developing. You should always be convinced that life is short and eternity eternal and that the human soul, as one French politician (Marc Sangnier) said recently, is worth more than the whole world, because the world will perish, and soul will be alive forever. Don't forget Holy Communion for Easter, because this is the least that our Creator asks of us." (...)

"Almost every day I think of mother's inner life. I admit that her upbringing had a strong influence on her. Dear father, please try to bring full contentment into mother's soul, in order for our family happiness to be perfect here on earth. And the sufferings which might threaten to undermine this happiness will not be able to disturb the inner balance..."³⁴

Paris, 9 October 1921 – (24 years and 10 months)
St. Dionysius the Areopagite
(beheaded around 258 A.D. on Montmartre)

*Philosophy of happiness – place the focus of all our desires
into the other world and work for Christ*

Dear parents! I thank dad for the letter and mom for the postcard of 26 September and 2 October, respectively. I gathered quite a lot of material for my dissertation... but there are still a lot of works to be read. My eyes are really weak, but not because of too much work, at least I don't think so, but because of an inborn condition. I always carry spectacles in the street and when reading (left eye +2 ½ diopter, right eye +3 d.). You can see from this that the condition of my eyes is almost the same as it was several years ago. I am asking you not to worry over this, but rather take a rosary into your hands and from time to time say to the Mother of God of Lourdes ten Hail Marys for this intention. Maybe you will be surprised at how I reckon with supernatural factors as one does with ordinary things. This is what I learned at Lourdes where many blind men had their vision restored. It is known, for example, that the writer Henri Laserre washed his eyes in the water in Lourdes and was completely healed. I take him as my model and I am asking you to help me with your prayers. (...)

Your remark, dad, that "the converts saved France" is true and thank you for drawing my attention to it. France is still not completely saved because although Catholics have a great number of intellectuals in their ranks (Bourget, Pordeau, Baumann, Bazin, Doumic, Boudrillart, Jammes, Claudel, etc.) who achieved world-wide fame, the masses are very demoralized. Catholics are still the minority. In our country, the intelligentsia is non-religious, while the folk keeps the Christian customs; here the case is just the opposite. Your claim that the priests and religious orders have the greatest merit for this Catholic renaissance among the French intellectuals is true, but these intellectuals (many of whom are converts) have rehabilitated the Catholic doctrine in public life. We down here live on the edge of the Church and it is natural that sects sprout and that apostasies occur on a daily basis. Today's Communion prayer in the mass of St. Dionysius says beautifully: "I tell you, my friends: do not fear those who persecute you..." and St. Paul places himself as our role model saying: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). (Meditate well on the meaning of the underlined words!) This is where the philosophy of happiness lies, i.e. the focus of all our desires should be placed in the

³⁴ Letter to the father from Paris, January 1921.

other world, and we should forget ourselves completely working for our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only eternal one. You, dad, could tell me that with these ideas people could all die of hunger. I gather that our logical deductions must be consequent. Namely, if we believe in an absolute Deity, and I assume that even mother believes in that, then there is no accident. ("Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows!" Luke 12:6-7)



Catholic University in Paris (Institut Catholique) in which Ivan studied.

We must, therefore, always do what is God's will, and if He wants us to fast, let us fast; if he demands that our head be chopped off, let us say: thank God. Besides, we ought to know that the dear God will never burden us with a burden we couldn't bear. This I write primarily for mother's sake who is always in a nervous fear. If there was no God and if the forces of accident ruled, I would understand her (in that case it would be the best to shoot the entire mankind); but as we are glad to know that this life is a brief phase and that afterwards we shall be in eternal heaven, let's be heroic, let's sacrifice a second of this life in order to enter the vast, limitless Heaven. (Meditate at least half an hour on the fraction which human life is compared to eternity).

Please let me know of every opposing thought, so that we can be successful in a joint effort in these twenty-three years that are left for us to be in this world, to use our joint efforts to save our souls and as many souls of our neighbors as we can.

With love, Your son and brother in Jesus Christ

Ivan

Zagreb, 17 October 1921 – (24 years and 10 months)

What thoughts are those, moreover in Paris!

Ivan's letter caused a very sharp reaction from his mother. She cannot follow Ivan's thinking and responds from her worldly point of view. We publish here parts of her letter:

Hans! I do not say "Dear" because I cried the whole day over your registered letter. What kind of thoughts are those, moreover in Paris! One mustn't think about existence or non-existence. Everything is as it is, the wise heads were pondering on those issues and have gone mad! Why are you causing such pain to me? For years, I suffer because you want to be different from the rest! Why? Where is my Hans who was cheerful and happy, who loved and understood everything human? (...) Write us joyful letters, not preparing your soul for the other world! You have no reasons to think like that. Exercise, talk to people and don't be one-sided! (...) To be all the time in the company of books written centuries ago, that is horrible! (...)

Mother

Paris, 20 October 1921 – (24 years and 10 months)

He is convinced in the truthfulness of the Catholic faith

Upon the receipt of the previous sharp letter from his mother, Ivan responds again, trying to convince her in the correctness of his views and a religious outlook on life and the world.

My dear mom!

Although your letter was written in a hopeless tone and you strike at me severely, it nevertheless made me glad. I hope that from now onward our correspondence will be more frequent and that we will have an opportunity to exchange our thoughts. It is fully understandable that my seven-year stay far from home in various social circles had a strong influence on me. Besides, you know that the life at the University of Vienna, then the war, study and finally Lourdes fully convinced me of the truthfulness of the Catholic faith and that, therefore, my whole life is centered around Christ our Lord. You shouldn't misunderstand me and imagine that believing means to be sad. Just the contrary. We must serve the Lord with joy and be happy looking at the beauty of nature, the happiness of family life and all other gifts.

I knew that my registered letter would cause you pain and I wrote it with the intention to arouse and ennoble our love. I know, of course, that you love me above anything else, and therefore, I wish to exploit your goodness. I protested in my heart for always writing only postcards to you telling you about the food, weather and health of Mrs. Michaut. Already in Vienna I wanted to share some bits about my inner life, about my heart, but I didn't dare. Now, the ice is broken and please, dear mom, answer me always precisely. (...) I would like that our mutual effort is not directed at our wellbeing only, on our health, but that we observe family life as a means towards one aim: to be active within our circle for the glory of God and happiness of our neighbors. In that case, our interests will be the same and I won't be forced to lead a separated (double) life towards you. (...) Apart from the connection of natural love which is strengthened by nature and gratitude, we must build a spiritual affiliation as well.

Of course, some obstacles must be moved out of the way, e.g. prejudices which you harbor towards faith which, as it seems to you, worries only about the other world, although we have proof that it creates happiness and wellbeing on earth as well (Montesquieu).

Please consider this once again – a Christian must be cheerful and not be afraid of life and people. There is a French proverb which says: *un saint triste-un triste saint*; a saint who is sad – this is a miserable saint.

As far as I am concerned, I try to be natural, but I cannot go against what I inherited from my father – the need to reflect.

Therefore, you can rest assured that I am contented and that I am well. During the summer, I often spent the whole day in the forests of the environs of Paris and I ate in nature. But now, I afford myself this pleasure only on Sundays. Besides, I am always in company. We have our organization here and we are often together. I am frequently also in the company of the French, several times I had the opportunity to give speeches, etc.

Ivan

Zagreb, 27 October 1921 – (24 years and 10 months)

I know that your thoughts circle around Christian faith, but...

Dear Hans! Parts of your letter brought me joy, parts didn't. There are a lot of things in it I don't understand (...). I know that your thoughts circle around the Christian faith, and there is nothing in it that I wish to criticize: but I cannot fathom that this is your life's vocation. (...) Hans! You are going down the wrong track. You cannot work only for others and not for yourself! (...). We lost you, Hans, even as a boy and you are the cause of unceasing worry to us. Hans! You are young, you are educated, you are good, you have a smart head. Throw away from you everything with which you started even as an immature boy. (...) Work, Hans! Pass your exams! Create a nest for yourself, and let your own hearth be your greatest happiness. Then you can also be active on the outside; firstly this, then the other! Then Lourdes! This was an episode in your life! Forget it! You cannot always think of the things that moved you. (...) You dreamed away your time in Vienna, Hans, and you are doing the same in Paris. Here is snow. Be my good child and write!

Love, Mother.

Paris, 6 November 1921 – (24 years and 11 months)

Catholic faith is my vocation in life

Dear Mom!

My plans are very simple. I will pass my exams, get a job and work in our organization and magazines. You should never think that I am lost to you! It goes without saying that I will always respond to your call, and, if necessary, I will firstly help you, and after that my friends. We have a misunderstanding. Catholic faith is my vocation in life, and it should be likewise with everyone, without exception. As this life is only a short preparation for eternity, it is natural that all our efforts are pointed in that direction. Someone gets married to win new tenants for Heaven, the other is a journalist who spreads the truth, yet another is a railway man and contributes to a fast spreading of the Kingdom of God, etc.

This seems impossible because we live in a century whose spiritual state is miserable. People forgot to think in a supernatural way, they live and die without knowing why. Maybe this miserable state will finally come to an end, but we must not let ourselves be overwhelmed by this muddy atmosphere in which we live.

Regarding Lourdes, even the critics agree that what is happening there is unexplainable by science. (...) Nobody is forcing you to believe the miracles in Lourdes, but sudden healings occurring there are undeniable.

I hope that we share the same opinion and that we shall pray to the dear God together. Let him guide our paths as he sees fit, and not as our imagination might desire.

Try, dear mom, to pray the rosary which I sent you and invoke the dear Mother of God from Lourdes to get well, because she can help you. Father can help you in this effort, and I will not be lazy as well.

I am looking forward to your quick and precise response.

Ivan

Zagreb, 12 November 1921. – (24 years and 11 months)

Mother pleads with him again to "get back to the right track"

My dear Hans! I like when you are like this, when you are sincere. (...) But, open your eyes Hans, and see that you have steered off the right track, learn from animals who instinctively do what is right, and are not seeking their salvation God knows where. It is true, you are living in an evil world; everything is so muddy, as you say. You have happily

emerged from all that, the golden youth should be bursting forth from you and you should be enjoying wonderful Paris. Instead of that; however, you sit over old books, and you want to live according to their letters and you will ruin your life like that. For several months, I was receiving from you only the pictures of monasteries and closed doors and I felt very sad. Is this the reason one travels abroad, to awaken such feelings?

Hans, come home! You need a family. You need love. At this age, you need mechanical work, not thoughts. For almost 17 years you have been sitting non-stop in a school bench, make it end now. When you returned home as a 20-year old sergeant major you were strong and fit, had full pockets, brought us presents and you were contented. You said: "Mom, you see, now I am happy." One mustn't want, Hans, what is impossible. We must adapt to life and even doing so we can remain honest and a complete human being. (...) I thought, Hans, that in Paris you were studying languages, history of art, but instead you let other people pull you by the nose and experience miracles. Go out into the streets, laugh, and jump and come back to us to your homeland. (...) Life must not be spent only in one's vocation and work, it has its human demands and duties and it is a sin to neglect them. Please do not walk around as a super-human, live simply, a normal human life.

Love, Mother

Paris, 27 November 1921 – (24 years and 11 months)

Ivan justifies the existence of miracles in Christianity in which he believes

Dear mom!

I want to respond to you last letter. It is understandable that your opinion is important to me, but you must admit, dear mom, that no man can know everything, and therefore, we must turn to an expert who will instruct us in the matters to which he dedicated his life.

I don't want to direct your attention only to the events at Lourdes which were examined by physicians and found to be events above the laws of nature. Scientific, medical papers were written about that, lectures were held at universities, but in spite of that the Church doesn't demand us to believe in the Lourdes miracles. But you are wrong if you think that we ought not to believe in miracles at all. The entire Old Testament is a historical testimony filled with miracles which God committed on behalf of the Jewish people to keep their faith alive. The Christian faith proceeds from Christ's resurrection, and if we would deny resurrection, the entire structure of Christianity would collapse. (...)

Regarding saints and my views from the "old age", I must cling to this steadfastly until someone convinces me that I am wrong. But this is impossible, because historical facts mustn't be falsified.

Regarding my health, they say that lately I look good and that I am a bit fatter than I used to be. I cannot judge this myself, but my comrade who weighs himself regularly, got 11 kilos at Mrs. Michaut. I wrote to you already that here the food is more plentiful. (...)

Love, Ivan



*Interior of the chapel of St. Vincent de Paul. The tomb of St. Vincent is above the main altar.
Here Ivan often came to attend Mass.*

This correspondence between Ivan and his parents was already published in Ivan's first biography by Dr. D. Kniewald: Dr. Ivan Merz – Life and Work, Zagreb, 1932 (pp. 127-133) which we took over and presented in a somewhat abridged form. At the end of the biography, Dr. D. Kniewald gives this short comment:

“Thanks to the generosity and kindness of Ivan's parents, we published this important correspondence between a mother and a son. The mother wants all the best to her single son here, on earth. And Ivan, burning with the flame of divine love, tries to lift his parents to a higher vantage point which sees this earthly life only as a step toward heaven. If he couldn't achieve this in full with his letters from the far-away world, he strived to do the same through personal contact, prayer and sacrifice. Today, Ivan's mother looks at everything from a totally different perspective. She finds it hard to believe that she could write and think in such a manner – because she looks upon all these issues with Ivan's eyes.”

MERZ'S PARIS PROGRAM FOR THE RE-CHRISTENING OF THE CROATIAN PEOPLE

The above title sounds a bit bombastically and maybe too ambitiously, but when we read Merz's letter below, we believe that the reader will agree with such a formulation. Among numerous letters which Merz sent to his former teacher Dr. Lj. Maraković from Paris, the one dated 12 September 1921 stands out in particular. In it, Ivan lays out his apostolic program for the re-Christening of the Croatian people which he wanted to start implementing right away. At that time, Ivan completed only one year of his studies in Paris. He saw a lot in French Catholics, and experienced a special renewal of his faith during a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Seized by the ardor for spreading God's Kingdom and the salvation of souls, Merz writes to his teacher what should be done among the Croatian people. Reading these thoughts and programmatic ideas we remain not only surprised, but amazed that a youth of 25, staying in Paris, the world center of culture and politics, along with the preparation for his profession as a teacher, places the care and striving for the religious renewal of his nation in the first place in his life. He is enflamed by an inner apostolic fervor for the strengthening and spreading of faith in the Croatian people. We publish the letter almost in full; we left out only some irrelevant matters relating to his financial circumstances and daily life.

Paris, Feast of the Holy Name of Mary,
12 September 1921 – (24 years and 9 months)

Dear Ljuba,

I received your letter and No. 9-10 of *Hrvatska prosvjeta*. *Hrvatska prosvjeta* is a beautiful magazine, only too few non-literary articles. I am mostly interested in Lahner's articles, because I love to study how the penetration of Christianity leaves its artistic reflection in literature.

Proposal for composing of a Croatian liturgical almanac

I often think whether a Croatian liturgical almanac could be composed, in which every feast would be accompanied by a folk song corresponding to that feast, or a good translation of an anthem, Psalm and the like for that day. Along with that, it would be good to add a comment about the poetry of the liturgical year and explain the poetry of the greatest literary work of mankind – the Breviary.⁴⁵⁵ I think, namely, that the citizens of Dubrovnik, as well as the generation of Preradović, knew liturgy better than we do and that it won't be difficult to find beautiful translations of the Psalms, antiphons and anthems. We could also use the Glagolitic translations, and illustrating the ecclesiastical year place a parallel for the Eastern rite. (...)

The necessity for spreading the Gospel among the people

We have no religious literature, our pupils lack good prayer-books, the Gospel is not spread among the people, not to mention scientific religious works which are necessary for every intellectual. Knowing all that, I nevertheless see that some work is being done and I thank God's mercy for permeating us, in spite of all our shortcomings, with an apostolic zeal. But I think that we must finally begin with the consolidation of the foundations and devote all our forces to have the Gospel translated and spread among the

⁴⁵⁵ Breviary – The Divine Office is a mandatory prayer-book for priests and the religious, and after the 2nd Vatican Council, when it was translated from Latin into native languages, the lay persons were called to pray it as well. Merz prayed it regularly still in the Latin language.

people. The fruits will not be visible immediately – we and our descendants will be dead by then – but I am convinced that the word of God will spontaneously re-Christianize all the layers of our people. It goes without saying that literacy courses must supplant the visual arts of the Middle Ages. When every house – in the cities and villages – will have a Gospel at the table, when a passage will be read from it before the meal, only then can we hope to have numerous clergy, that our monasteries will be full and that religious orders will be founded which will correspond to the needs of this particular epoch. The spreading of the Kingdom of God in our country must begin with the episcopate and the clergy as the pillars, and we laymen are only stones or plaster of this grand building.

Deep impressions of the pilgrimage to Lourdes

I also want to tell you something about pilgrimages. In Lourdes I felt great manifestations. Pilgrimages are the best schools of prayer. I can tell you that in Lourdes I prayed really for the first time to the Blessed Virgin Mary. (...)

Here follows the description of his experience of Lourdes and a meeting with the Blessed Virgin Mary. (We published this description in the chapter of his experience in Lourdes). He ends his impressions of Lourdes with the following conclusion:

I think we should organize pilgrimages to Marija Bistrica or other shrines where we shall pray to the Blessed Virgin together. I am sure these prayers will bear fruit for our earthly life because, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

On the need of new priests and cooperation of the diseased for the eternal salvation of the people

As I said, the only purpose of life is to save your soul, and also, save as many souls of our neighbors as we can. Therefore, the priestly vocation is the greatest vocation because in it all the energies are focused for the realization of this idea. Whoever has no problems with keeping the celibate or other obstacles, let him go for priesthood.

Do you still remember that chapter from Huysman’s *En Route*, where he speaks about the *mystical lightning rod*, about the religious orders which, with their suffering, mitigate the wrath of God? We, unfortunately, have no such orders except the Trappists, but we have quite a number of ill persons within our movement, who could take upon themselves, suffering patiently, all the punishments for the sins committed within our movement. It is sad to see when our patients suffer impatiently, while having this grace given by the dear God to work for the movement. When we shall have an army of sufferers, prayerful persons and workers, we shall be able to progress slowly but surely on all fronts. I am sure that in such a way we must win over all the classes of our people and save our whole nation for eternity.

Public life ignores God, criticism of those Christians who are afraid of publicly stating their faith

Although Catholicism is now on the rise in Europe, overall it is still in a terrible regression. Having felt in Lourdes that in an incomprehensible mighty way the whole mankind – this tiny bit – is created to give honor to the immeasurable God, I wonder how at the same time the states, laws, workers, masons, the whole administrative apparatus functions like a machine, as if God didn’t exist. One is horrified to think of this. And who is to blame? The good ones, because they are not better! Mankind simply doesn’t know that God exists, because Catholics, instead of praying in public places, instead of quitting every position if it is contrary to the faith, hide when they pray to God, receive Communion when there is no one else in church, etc. We are to blame. The first Christians were traitors, in opposition to the state and their environment, they were tortured and thrown into dungeons, and we fall silent at the first sign of danger.

A concrete program for the re-Christianization of the Croatian people

Before ending, I wanted to share with you what they told me in *Action populaire*: “The best work is self-effacing work. A bad setup must be supplanted by putting in its place a good one. Stop attacking others and destroying! What is the purpose of criticism if we don’t know with what to supplant the evil?” You could have seen the Dorsiers to stick to this principle and really, with their work, they slowly supplant the capitalistic economic setup with a Christian-solidary one.

The following lies heavily on my heart:

To start with translating and publishing of the Gospel as soon as possible,

To organize pilgrimages,

To begin agitating in all our papers for the priestly vocation,

To instruct our patients in the great value of willful suffering and

That the energy which until now was spent in negative criticism be used for the explanation and propagation of our doctrine.

Please, don’t be mad at me for having written so much. As God’s Mercy has used you to help me realize the truth of Catholicism, I hold that I had to share all this with you. Of course, as always, I recommend myself to your prayers, because as the apostle says: “I know the good, but commit evil...” and “our adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour”. (...)

In the letter, I enclose a relic of Bernardette, which was given to me in Lourdes by a nun, a friend of Bernardette, whom I happened to meet by chance. (...)

I sent you from Toulouse an article about Lourdes. Did the *Narodna politika* publish it? Are you sending *Hrvatska prosvjeta* in exchange for *Demokratie*? Did you receive the cable which we prepared for the meeting in Đakovo? Are you already receiving the *Croix de Lourdes*? Did you receive *Art et Scolastique*? We will know the outcome about our scholarships soon.

Respectfully yours

Ivan

ZAGREB

1922 – 1924

Texts of a diary character



View of Zagreb

After completing his studies in Paris in the autumn of 1922, Ivan got a job in the Archbishopal High School in Zagreb as a teacher of French and German. The next year, 1923, he attained a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Zagreb with a dissertation on the influence of liturgy on French writers. In autumn of that same year he passed the state teacher's exam. After having achieved all the preconditions for the teaching profession and beginning working, Ivan immediately involved himself actively in the Catholic educational work with youth and in August 1923 was elected president of the Croatian Catholic Youth Association which by the end of that year merged with the Croatian Eagle Association, where Merz was co-founder and secretary.

These last six years of Ivan's life were filled with numerous activities in the field of the Catholic lay apostolate and educational work with youth, particularly within the Eagle organization. He advocated intensely for the implementation of Catholic action, for the promotion of knowledge of pontifical teaching and following pontifical guidelines, worked on liturgical renewal, etc. During this period of intense external activity Ivan didn't manage to keep his Diary. Only a couple of months before his death, he filled several pages leaving us precious information about his state of mind and suffering that he was undergoing at that time. However, from this period too, we possess his texts of a diary character, although they were not entered into his official diary notebook.

In the first place, there is his very interesting article under the title *My Diary* published by the newspaper *Narodna politika*. It is a report from his voyage to Milan in 1923 in which he describes in a diary manner the visit to some Catholic institutions that he was particularly interested in and wanted to organize something similar in Croatia.

A report and impressions from the 52nd French National pilgrimage to Lourdes in which he took part he published by the end of August 1924 in the *Zagreb Catholic Gazette*, in a series of articles in the form of a diary, and later published the same text as a brochure entitled *The Most Recent Miracles in Lourdes*. In the month of September of that same year, he spent several days in the Argent castle in France upon the invitation of the aristocratic family De Montbelle. He described this visit in the form of a diary which remained unpublished to this date. In it he gives very interesting observations about the French nobility and their lifestyle.

Especially important are his notes from three spiritual exercises which he performed in Zagreb in 1923, 1924 and 1926, as well as special notes from 1927 (*Liber luminum*) which can also be categorized as diary entries. These notes reveal to us the most intimate part of his spirituality and give us an insight in his personal relationship to God. We added to the above material his last decisions for a more perfect Christian way of life which he tried to carry out.

From the year 1925, we have a very interesting manuscript which we entitled a Spiritual Auto-profile. These are his answers to the questions in a survey which Dr. D. Kniewald submitted to two hundred young men, as part of the preparation of the guide-prayer book *The Catholic Pupil*.

Following the chronology of writing of individual texts, at the beginning of this line of texts of a diary character, we added one other of Merz's important texts, his famous Foreword to the *Golden Book*. In this text the soul of Ivan Merz speaks out at the beginning of his public activities, enflamed by the fire of the apostolate which he wanted to share with the entire Eagle youth with whom he worked.

To these texts, we added his last very interesting letter written only three days before going to the hospital for surgery. He wrote it to his friend, Fr. Mate Blašković from Hvar. In this letter, he gave us insight into his soul immediately before his death. To this we added his last conversation of a diary character with his spiritual director, Fr. Vrbank. Although it was not written by him, but by his spiritual director, we find here precious data about Ivan's mood before death; Ivan was aware that God was seeking from him the sacrifice of life, to die young, but he was not taking this realization in a passive way, dedicating instead his death to God as a sacrifice for the Croatian youth.

Finally, we publish the last document written by Ivan's own hand before death, entitled *The Testament*. This concerns the text for his tombstone inscription. This is the last, solemn confession of his deep faith.

Although they do not belong directly to his personal diary entries and texts, as a kind of solemn conclusion of Ivan's life and his sanctity to which God's invisible grace was leading him, we publish two texts of recognition of his success before God. The first is the article *Homo catholicus* which was published immediately after Ivan's death by his close friend, catholic intellectual Prof. Dušan Žanko. The other text is the speech by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of Ivan's beatification in Banja Luka on 22 June 2003. These texts are in a way the best expression of the reception of Ivan's sanctity in the hearts and souls of those who knew him either during his lifetime, or later through the writings and works he left us as his heritage.

As was mentioned in the Introduction, this first written work by Ivan Merz, the Diary, is not his autobiography or a biography, but an important document by means of which we can enter the tabernacle of his soul which God gradually permeated and wherefrom the ideas, initiatives, programs came forth which he realized during the last six years, for the glory of God and the spreading of Christ's Kingdom among souls. Although in the last years of his life he didn't leave many texts of a diary character, he left us numerous other texts, some of which were published during his lifetime, and the majority still in manuscript form, which are not published within his Collected Works; these documents, papers, articles and studies are a great testimony of his soul which was filled

with a zeal for God and the spreading of his Kingdom. Numerous works which he published during the last six years of his life are a fruit of the conviction which he carried deep inside himself and with which he came to Zagreb after completing his studies, and this is that “the Catholic faith is his life vocation”⁴⁵⁶. In these works, those published as well as those in manuscript we can read his spirituality, richness of his soul, etc. The essential characteristics of his spirituality – love towards the Church and papacy and fight for the Catholic action – find an especially strong expression in these works. It was not possible to publish here the testimonies of numerous witnesses, in order to perceive Merz in his full perspective. As we said in the Introduction, in order to fully experience and get to know Merz, it is necessary to consult his biography and in it those parts which focus on Ivan’s work in the last six years of his life.



Seal of the Croatian Eagle organization: eagle above the shield with a white cross and three letters Ž.E.A., standing for three words: Sacrifice – Eucharist – Apostolate. It was the password of the Eagle movement which Ivan Merz gave on the occasion of the founding of the Croatian Eagle Union in 1923 in which he was active until his death

⁴⁵⁶ Letter to his mother from Paris on 6 November 1921.

VISIT TO CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS

"My Diary"

Milan, from 22 until 27 October 1923

The first text of a diary character from the period when Ivan didn't keep his diary in Zagreb is the one from the 22nd until 27th October 1923. In it he describes his trip to Milan in the company of Dr. Maraković and Fr. Ante Radić, where he visited several Catholic institutions and met with respectable Catholic persons. This diary entry he published later in the newspaper Narodna politika (Zagreb, 10 January 1925, No. 2, p.3) under the title My Diary. We publish the entire text below:

Milan (Italy), 22 October 1923

We stayed with the Jesuit fathers in Corso Piazza Nuova. We went by ourselves to the Catholic University where a young lady explained to us the current position of the new institution. They count the semesters; only those who wish to take jobs with the state must pass the exams in state universities. This is the same system as we have seen in France, the relationship between the Catholic and state universities. That young lady praised the Fascist government which, in her words, always supports the Catholics and pays a great attention to the religious upbringing of youth.



Cathedral in Milan

In the shop windows, we saw a number of good Catholic books (8 via Boschetto) and we can attest first-hand that the Catholic production is very intensive. It seems that the most of the works are from the mystical field, liturgy, Christian poetry, female and social issues.

In the afternoon, Fr. Palaviccini, the outer priest of the Order of St. Ambrose, took us to the Enterprise of Cardinal Ferrari⁴⁵⁷. Along the way, he was telling us how the Catholic life in post-war Italy is richer and richer every day. Lately, Italy has been through difficult times. Those who returned from the war didn't want to know anything about the Church. Capitalists, those who exploited the people in an inhuman way, pushed the workers into despair. In Italy, a serious revolution occurred, of which the foreign public remained ignorant because the Italian government spent a huge amount of money to silence the foreign press. The workers occupied the factories, sent armed guards onto the streets, made searches... In the "Diana" theatre, they threw bombs in the midst of a performance, killed the entire orchestra and a large number of spectators. The people here shook and wept in despair. Nevertheless, Italy was saved from the revolution – socialists were completely broken here. And what was that strong factor which made people realize that the socialist utopias are unrealistic? By all means, the Enterprise of Cardinal Ferrari is one of the most beautiful institutions I ever saw.



Catholic University of the Heart of Jesus in Milan

This is a lay order: there are three vows, and they are taken (if I'm not mistaken) for one year at a time. All of them are employees, and at the same time all of them – men and women – are religious. They have a department for men, for women and for the press. In the male department, there is a dining hall for 1500 people, apartments, schools for 3000 pupils. Everything is in grand style. Here are all the branches of technical education (sawing, typewriting, painting, ceramics, electrical engineering, school for locksmiths, church singing and another twenty-odd other professions).

The main secretary – a man who by his looks doesn't differ from any other civilian – took us into the chapel, and then into another where the most holy Sacrament is displayed night and day and said that herein lays the strength of their entire enterprise. During the night from Thursday to Friday they stand vigil in front of the Most Holy, and the next day they work as if they had slept the night.

We saw again how a saint is the most modern man. Cardinal Ferrari established this institution, always in a modern way – using the most modern means (they have a wireless telegraph) – in order to spread the social Kingdom of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus.

⁴⁵⁷ *Enterprise of Cardinal Ferrari* is an Italian Catholic social institution established in Milan after World War I to help the workers and poorer classes of society. Merz gave an extensive overview of the creation and activity of this institution in a separate article entitled *Enterprise of Cardinal Ferrari* which he published in the *Catholic Gazette* (in Croatian), Zagreb, 1922, No. 46, pp. 551–554. The article was published again in Vol. 2 of his *Collected Works*, Zagreb, 2011., pp. 55–61. Merz was considering the idea of establishing such an institution in Croatia.

Milan, 24 October 1923

Yesterday there were some unpleasant scenes at the meeting of *Union catholique d'étude internationale*. The Italians couldn't understand that the French were against permitting entry to the Germans, and the French took offence because the Italians wanted Germans to enter immediately.

This day passed usefully. We bought – Ljuba and me – several ascetic and mystical books. In the above meeting, the Italians and the French reached an agreement and Mr. Raynald spoke about the *Bureau Internationale de Cooperation Intellectuelle* and showed how Catholics can exert a practical influence under the direction of this bureau.

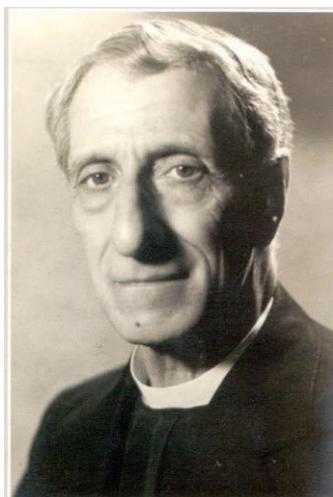
We had lunch in the Enterprise of Cardinal Ferrari, and then we visited the Institute for foreign missions which doesn't seem to have a place of prominence. In the "Brera" Gallery we observed Raphael's *Sposalizzia* for a long time; otherwise, there are no especially valuable paintings in this gallery.

In the afternoon, the session was interesting: they spoke mostly about those countries which due to the low value of their currency or due to disorderly political circumstances have come to grief. We ought to strive that Catholic universities get help; that the scholarships are given to Catholics also.

The newspaper of the People's Party *L'Italia* has a mass of big machines. They are in direct telephone link with Paris. If we compare this editorial office, administration, printing plant with ours, only then we realize how backward we are. Here there is a lot of faith – let us awaken it in our country as well, and we shall have similar institutions.

In *Gabinetto Cattolico milanese*, where an elderly lady greeted us warmly, there was nothing special.

Zagreb, 27 October 1923



Servant of God Don Luigi Sturzo

In Certosa di Pavia⁴⁵⁸ we saw immense wealth, but it didn't make a religious impression on me. On the sessions of the Union there were frequent clashes between the French and the Italian points of view. Don Sturzo⁴⁵⁹ impressed me as a man who knows the inner needs of the Italian people, but not the needs of the Church in the world. It seems as if his view reached only to the borders of Italy. Otherwise, he also advocated an unyielding international point of view: but, it seems to me, more as a theoretician who didn't have a chance to come into contact with Catholics of other nations and understand their needs.

⁴⁵⁸ A well-known Carthusian monastery, of a great historical, cultural, religious and artistic value in Pavia, Italy.

⁴⁵⁹ Don Luigi STURZO (1871–1959), a well-known Italian priest and politician, one of the co-founders of the party *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democracy) (1900). In 1919 he founded a new party *Partito popolare italiano* which had a strong impact on Italian social life. His main idea was that Catholics should involve themselves in politics, should enter the political structures in order to apply through them the principles of the social teaching of the Church. He opposed fascism and therefore had to go to exile, which he spent in London and New York. With the permission of pope Pius XII he was nominated life-long senator in the Italian parliament due to his great scientific and social merits. In 2002 the cause for his beatification and canonization was initiated.

Miss Barelli⁴⁶⁰, the president of the Female Youth Union, showed me the disciplined work of Italian girls whose paper is printed in a circulation of 205,000. They recently published a liturgical handbook and will start to sing liturgically. In addition, they recently gathered all the medical specialists who designed female physical exercises for them. They also collected the greatest amount of money for the Catholic University. Mussolini, namely, declared that women must learn physical exercises, and the Female Union took it upon itself to fulfil this troublesome request.



Venerable servant of God Armida Barelli

On our return from Milan some railway men noticed how we cut the pages of Italian religious books. They were Catholic young men and we had a cordial exchange with them. In memory of our meeting we gave them a photograph of the Holy Father with the blessing of the Croatian Catholic Youth Association.



Relief of the Bl. Ivan Merz shows how he connects the Croats with Rome. It was made in 1991 by the sculptor Ante Starčević. Original work is in the Home of Croatian Pilgrims in Rome, and before its placement it was blessed by Pope John Paul II in the Vatican

⁴⁶⁰ Armida BARELLI (1882–1952), a well-known Italian Catholic youth worker, national president of the Italian Catholic action for girls. She was very engaged alongside the Franciscan Fr. Agostino Gemelli in the founding of the Catholic University in Milan. The process of her beatification begun in 1970 and in 2007 a decree was issued of heroic virtues. With this, she got the title of a "honorable servant of God" and this is what she will be called until beatification.

NOTES FROM SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Zagreb, from 7 until 9 November 1923

One of the means which Ivan highly praised for the advancement of inner life were spiritual exercises. They were present in his life during his studies and later activity in Zagreb. For the first time, he performed them as a student in Vienna during the Holy Week until Easter, from 31 March until 5 April 1920, and then in July 1921 in Paris. Upon returning to Zagreb he continued with this practice. From the year 1923 we have his notes from spiritual exercises which he performed from 7th until 9th November 1923 in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb under the guidance of his spiritual director, Fr. Josip Vrbaneč. Generally, the notes from the spiritual exercises are a precious document through which we can look into the soul of a person and his or her relationship with God. Ivan was no exception. These notes enable us a deep insight into his spiritual life. Certain words in the notes, such as “corrective” and “creates” Ivan underlined wishing to stress their particular importance for him. We put them into Italics.

*According to the testimony of Fr. Josip Vrbaneč, Ivan’s confessor and spiritual director, in these spiritual exercises Ivan decided that he will not have a family of his own and that he will dedicate his whole life and work to God. A month later, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, on 8th December 1923, Ivan took the eternal vows of chastity (See: J. Vrbaneč – *The Knight of Christ – Ivan Merz*, Zagreb, 1943, p. 183 [in Croatian])*

7 November 1923

I. Meditation

No light during meditation.

The prayer of *Confiteor* (I confess) very clear. In it the fruit of the meditation is apparent. Especially: *Quia peccavi nimis cogitatione verbo et opere* (because I sinned a lot in thought, word and deed).

1. Because God created us for his glory. He gave us the mental world which originates in Him and must be an extension of His inner life. *Peccavi* (I sinned): because it was not always like that with me.
2. Because God created us for his glory. Our words must give only testimony about Him, must transmit His inner life into the souls of our neighbors. *Peccavi* (I sinned) because it was not always like that with me.
3. Because God created us for his glory. He gave us the capability to create works which represent his inner life and give testimony of Him. *Peccavi* (I sinned) because it was not always like that with me.

When praying the Rosary, I meditate better when the prayer is oral (I could meditate even better if several persons prayed aloud).



Ivan Merz – teacher in Zagreb

II. Meditation

I will serve God as a corrective in Catholic organizations because I perceive permanent deviations from real doctrines (Seniorate, Eagles, Domagoj).⁴⁶¹

Representative of the idealism of Catholic Action in the seminary. No authority on the holy Liturgy.

Everything that happens to me, or people do to me, I must take as if it came from God himself and therefore nothing must disturb my inner peace. Always imagine that God and I are the only ones in the world.

III. Meditation

The fastest and surest way to the goal – the salvation of my soul. If I remain in the world staying with my parents, going to school and attending meetings in organizations, writing for papers, there will be no strong movements in my life; everything will be a “messaging about”. Do I enter a Church order? It is almost out of the question that my eyes could stand an intensive study (maybe an operation would help). So, how to save my soul with certainty? How to give full meaning to my life? I ought to take a vow of obedience to a group, an organization, which is unquestionably under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which unquestionably creates in its actions – main ones and those on the sidelines, great and small – the Kingdom of God. This could be the Catholic Movement if the Archbishop of Zagreb took care of it. But as his interest in the Catholic Movement is nowhere to be seen, and he is the only one to whom I could swear obedience, I must lean on an order which is by its international character independent of the hierarchy, but still creates The Kingdom of God.

⁴⁶¹ This sentence-decision by Ivan is very important. It tells us that in these spiritual exercises Ivan took a final decision not to go into the monastery and become a religious, but that he remains in the world as a consecrated layman, and he perceives his serving of God as a corrective, i.e. rectifier of wrong views, and consequently wrong actions in the first place within Catholic organizations of his time. His great and successful apostolic work which he developed in the last years of his life is the realization of this vocation. He introduced into our Catholic public, especially among the engaged lay persons, through Catholic Action the correct interpretation of the lay apostolate in unity with the hierarchic Church.



Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb, a place which Ivan visited daily. In the Jesuit monastery alongside the Basilica he performed his spiritual exercises in 1923.

8 November 1923

I. Meditation

I must contemplate more frequently than I did until now about the evil of sin and various moments from the Old Testament. Only when I get to know and feel the meaning of sin, will I be able, full of love, to embrace the holy Cross which freed me from such a great, eternal misfortune. I must overcome human concerns so that they do not ruin those few moments that one can dedicate to eternal truths while living in the world.

II. Meditation

I asked God would I like to see myself on my death bed as a priest or a religious. I didn't get any particular illumination with regard to that. I would be completely happy if I died in the position in which I am. I only fear that in my work for Catholic organizations, writing and other actions I followed more my personal sympathies than what is in God's greater interest. Therefore, it would be necessary that, continuing to work in the milieu where God's will has placed me, I work according to someone's directives, i.e. those whose calling and whose life is under a more direct influence of the Holy Spirit.

Bodily predispositions: weak eyes. Therefore: not to dedicate myself completely to intellectual work. Resistance of the body to tiredness, bad food, rain, hard bunk – predispositions which inspire me to travel to places where we have our organizations.

Predispositions of the soul: knowledge of languages and Catholic movements in different countries. To be a mediator between these movements and ours (the work of the corrector). Orientation in literature – judge it from the Catholic point of view. Same with Liturgy. If I write something, first give it to someone to read.

Consideratio

Just like the Savior broke away from his parents, my heart too will free itself of family bonds. I must fulfil the will of my Heavenly Father and be prepared to leave home when He demands it. Now, while I still live with my parents, I can live a free existence and work where the Catholic Movement demands irrespective of my parents. My obligation is to earn as much money as they need for a comfortable life and see to it that their life and work are according to the heart of God.

III. Meditation

How sweet it is, Jesus, to be part of Your army, to serve under Your flag. I forget both my father and mother and everything what is dear to me when I remember Your heavenly presence and Your dear Mother. Jesus, I give myself fully to You! I would be the happiest if I could serve you in a place where there is continuous meditation about You and where continuous service to You is being rendered. I gather that you don't want me to enter a religious order, because of what use would I be with my weak eyes; but, Jesus, You probably want me to serve you more perfectly in the position in which I am now. Is it Your desire that we establish a new brotherhood of Catholic lay persons who will pledge to serve You? Wouldn't you like that in their program they have two-day spiritual exercises every month? Couldn't they make a pledge that they will receive You every day and that they will pray daily according to the instructions of those who will be at the head of this brotherhood? And their apostolate would be ordered according to the instructions of these directors to whom they would make an obligation of obedience. Jesus, Your will be done!

Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus! ("Speak Lord, Your servant listens!")



Place in the pew in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb from which Ivan followed the Mass every day. The open book is his French-Latin Missal.

9 November 1923

I. Meditation

Jesus, when you show to the runner three goals and place a laurel wreath on each of them, who wouldn't wish to grab the one which is furthest and to which it is most difficult to come? I ask you, Jesus, therefore, that in the social class which I have chosen, I always try to imitate You; not to seek any wealth of my own, to be obedient to Your incentives in my soul and the advice of my spiritual director whom You are using, and have no other Betrothed save You, my Savior. Do not allow me to ever disappoint you and give me strength to suffer with gladness and thus be ever more similar to You.

I ask you therefore, Jesus, the possibility that in my social class I always find enough time to contemplate eternal truths and to unite with you, my God, every day.

II. Meditation

You are telling me, Jesus, to follow you. Therefore, I ask of you to burn from me all the ties that still bind me to my parents and sometimes make me flabby and indecisive in Your service. I therefore decide that from now on I will live in my family house a life fully dedicated to You. If I perceive that this life restricts me in fulfilling Your will even

in the minutest detail and that in another position I could do more for Your glory, I promise that I will leave my family home.

III. Meditation

I felt all the love of God, which is manifested in his immeasurable benevolence. In the benevolence of body and soul. He himself is present in all of them, he works giving us these gifts. He puts the universe in motion, the sun so that I might live, as well as the plants who feed me. But the greatest benevolence is where the immeasurable God gives himself to us. He is manifesting his greatness in the endless universe, in the great seas; his love in the sanctifying grace which fills these billions of tiny, unbelieving souls with Himself and makes them participants in the immeasurable. O, he is showing his immeasurable love not only through his benevolences, not only through his presence, not only by giving us his gifts, but by giving us his immeasurable being in the small Host for food.

O, the overflowing love of God, who gives such a gift beyond comprehension to such an insignificant speck of dirt which is man.

As a return gift to you, God, I give myself. Take me and do not allow me to ever look back and regret my choice. Let me accept the chalice of suffering and to invoke Your name on this earth, so that after that I might look at you face to face!

Jesus, without a spiritual renewal of Croatian people there is no real renewal. All the rest is merely messing about. This is the meaning of the words of the spiritual director. If you want me, Jesus, to become a religious – here I am! Give me the grace to leave for Your sake my father and mother!

FOREWORD TO THE GOLDEN BOOK

1924

Ivan Merz's Apostolic Program

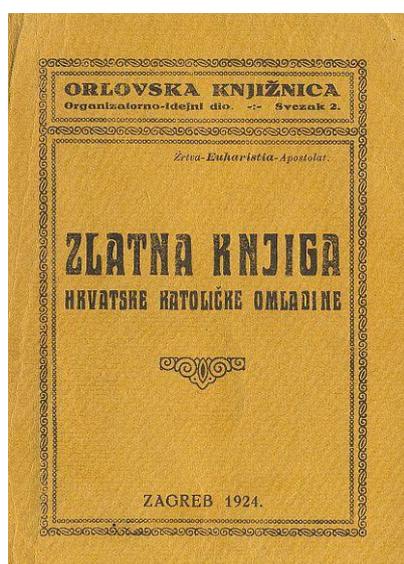
Although it does not belong to the Diary proper, due to the importance of ideas which Merz puts forward in this text, we thought it necessary to include it in the book in this place, observing the chronological order of its creation. The ideas which ripened during Merz's studies, which he courageously implemented and suffered for, which lived in him until his death, in this Foreword he put on paper. This Foreword was published in the 3rd volume of his Collected Works with a more extensive comment and within the entire text of the Golden Book to which it was dedicated⁴⁶². In this text, we find the essence of his view of apostolic work and it reveals to us his deep conviction which he shared with his mother in a letter from Paris: "Catholic faith is my vocation in life". It is therefore important to stress these ideas once again in this place where they chronologically belong, because they contribute to an even better understanding of his spiritual identity and richness of his soul.

After the Croatian Eagle Association was founded in Zagreb on 16 December 1923, Ivan Merz, who was a member of the Founding Committee, was entrusted with the task of preparing the Croatian edition of the Golden Book, the basic handbook of the organization for intellectual and spiritual formation of its members. This handbook already existed in the Slovenian language. Merz didn't only translate the book, but expanded it and enriched it in many places with new elements of a religious and Church character. Merz wanted to root the new Eagle Association from its beginnings into the foundations of Catholic Action which was initiated by Pope Pius XI in Rome at that time.

⁴⁶² Ivan Merz, *Collected Works*, 3rd Volume, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 276–277.

Merz drew the attention of the reader on all these novelties in his Foreword which we, therefore, classify as a magna charta of his apostolic work in which he laid out all the basic ideas on which the new organization was supposed to be built and according to which it was supposed to act. These were the ideas which he himself put into practice in his life and the entire Foreword is considered to be his apostolic program. When we read it, we perceive how the fervor and the enthusiasm of love for Christ and the Church permeate a young man who with his ideas wants to enflame other young souls and draw them closer to the values for which he himself was living.

Unfortunately, the Foreword in the form in which it was written and proposed was not published in the Golden Book. A group of Catholics, his co-workers which at that time did not accept the ideas of pontifical Catholic Action and were against Merz's efforts to implement it in Croatia, removed his Foreword from the book at the time of its going into print.⁴⁶³ By this very fact, this "martyred" Foreword gained in value and interest for us. Merz published parts of it in the Catholic Weekly four years later under the title "From the History of Croatian Eagle Organization" (in Croatian).⁴⁶⁴



"The Golden Book" – a spiritual handbook of the Eagle organization prepared by Ivan Merz. Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac as a member of this organization in his youth said of it: "This book is pure gold!"

Dr. Dragutin Kniewald in his biography of Ivan Merz describes the whole story about the removal from print of this "historical and martyr's" Foreword: "Unfortunately, this Foreword, after it was already printed, was removed from the Golden Book. Nearly all the references were also removed which mention obedience, love and loyalty of the Croatian Eagles towards the Holy Father and local bishops. Dr. Ivan Merz cried – but it was not the cry of a weakling against the force against whom he could still fight. He saw that at this moment what he wanted to achieve was not possible at this point, and he

⁴⁶³ For a better understanding of the incident of the removal of this Foreword by Ivan Merz from the *Golden Book*, which Merz revised and prepared for printing, we refer the reader to the literature on the Croatian Catholic Movement (HKP) where the conflict which arose at the beginning of the 1920s among the active Croatian Catholics between the Seniorate, leadership of the HKP, and leadership of the Eagle organization. Of a special relevance is the article: Božidar Nagy, *The Causes of Division in the Croatian Catholic Movement*, published in the book: *CROATIAN CATHOLIC MOVEMENT, Proceedings of the international scientific meeting*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2002, pp. 639–652. (in Croatian)

⁴⁶⁴ Ivan Merz, *From the History of the Croatian Eagle Movement*, *Katolički tjednik*, Sarajevo, 1927, No. 25, pp. 8–9. (in Croatian)

*strived to achieve in a step-wise manner what he couldn't achieve at once. He began to propagate, defend and implement systematically these ideas among the ranks of the Eagles. Along with all the forced censorship on the part of the incompetent, the Golden Book, as prepared by Dr. Merz, contains a special chapter about the Church and spiritual director as a representative of the competent ecclesiastical authority, the religious demands are somewhat greater and the Catholic Action is consciously emphasized. Dr. Merz knew well and always stressed that the first aim of the Catholic Action is the Catholic social apostolate, i.e. the defense, spreading and consolidating of Catholic principles in a personal, family and public life.”*⁴⁶⁵

Let us add to this several remarks regarding new ideas which Ivan Merz introduced in the Golden Book, which were not present in the Slovenian edition. Already the first words on the cover (outside cover and inner title page) contained the novelty: Sacrifice – Eucharist – Apostolate. This is the motto which Merz gave to the new organization of Catholic youth at the foundation of the Croatian Eagle Association and which were accepted by the Founding Committee. Here, in brief, in three words, we find expressed the entire program which was later implemented by the members of the Eagles' organization. This is the motto which Merz placed at the very beginning of the Golden Book, even before the title itself!

*We now publish the text of the unpublished Foreword of Ivan Merz for the Golden Book in full, according to the original manuscript which is kept in his archive.*⁴⁶⁶

FOREWORD

The Slovenian original of the *Golden Book* was published as early as 1910 by Mr. Franc Terseglav, its writer, who in an inspiring way laid out in it the ideology of the Slovenian Catholic youth of his time. He tried to give the book a lasting value and to serve all the future generations of the Slovenian Catholic youth. The eternal principles of the Catholic Church which he adapted to Slovenian circumstances were for him a guarantee that this small catechism will educate more than one generation of conscious Slovenian Catholics.

Nevertheless, many will wonder why we dared in spite of this to enrich and re-write this book. The key reason for this is that from the year 1910, i.e. from the publication of this book, organized Catholic Action developed in a magnificent way throughout the world and this grand life of the Catholic Church left among our youth its deep traces too.

What our older comrades were satisfied with, doesn't satisfy us anymore. We needn't fight so much in public to ensure the right of our existence, as they did with much enthusiasm and success. Public opinion today reckons with organized Catholic youth and there are few to whom it seems odd that an educated person can be a loyal son of the Catholic Church.

The new Catholic generation went one step further. It was engulfed in the waves of the rivers which flowed from the eternal Rome in the year 1905 when the late pope Pius X published a Breve⁴⁶⁷ about a frequent and daily receiving of the Communion. The young generation cherishes the enchanting love towards our Savior present in the most holy Eucharist; here this generation draws the strength for its action, for its apostolate. While the older generation affirmed Christianity in an intellectual, apologetic way and showed

⁴⁶⁵ Dragutin Kniewald, *Dr. Ivan Merz – Life and Work*, Zagreb, 1932, pp. 162–163. (in Croatian)

⁴⁶⁶ Ivan Merz Archive, F21, No. 6 and No.12

⁴⁶⁷ Pontifical document in which the faithful are instructed to implement something in the life and activity of the Church and its members.

enormous dedication in resisting the onslaught of liberalism, the new generation is calmer. It is in a constant and intimate touch with Jesus who reigns in their souls.

Linked with the above is the enchanting love of the young towards the holy Church, Jesus' immaculate fiancée and its bishops and priests. They are convinced that the priests have the first and most important role in spreading of the Kingdom of God, and that the lay persons must join them; they must become their assistants. Therefore, we see that in other peoples the most illustrious members of Catholic youth societies went into seminaries, and it seems that soon that spirit will descend upon us too. This edition of the *Golden Book* has the purpose of returning to the priesthood that dignified place which the disciples of Jesus had.

From this *Golden Book*, it is also visible that youth has its eyes always directed toward Rome, where there is the lighthouse which illuminates the whole earth with its rays. It is from Rome that in recent times the guidelines came forth which reckon with Catholic Action as a fact and which define its role in a very precise way.

For this reason, in adapting the *Golden Book*, we mostly took into account those instructions which the last popes gave to the Catholic Action, especially the youth movement. Catholic Action includes, therefore, "...connected, organized Catholic forces for the protection, spreading, implementation and defense of Catholic principles in individual, family and social life."⁴⁶⁸ As regards the organized Catholic youth itself, the Holy Father Pius XI – the pope of the Catholic Action – said clearly that it must strive towards its own religious, and then mental, cultural, social education.⁴⁶⁹ The Catholic youth movement must take care of the upbringing of the elite, of the upbringing of the apostles. The societies of Catholic youth must be – as was said in the Third International Catholic Youth Congress – real seminaries which will systematically educate the regenerators of human society; they must be the Church which listens – *Ecclesiae audienti* – real seminaries in which the assistants of the Church will be systematically educated by the Church who educates – *Ecclesiae docentis*.

It proceeds from the above that we today place on our youth far greater demands than could have been done a quarter of a century ago. For this reason, we determined in detail what are the religious duties of an Eagle, how many times (at least) he must receive Communion, what should be his relationship toward the Church and its members. While the older generation stressed more the love of God and people, among the young this love of God attained a more concrete form in the love of Jesus in the Eucharist, and the love of the people must be subordinated to the love of the holy Church.

May the good God grant us that the *Golden Book* in this form educates an army of apostles⁴⁷⁰, an army of saints, which will spread to all corners of the Croatian homeland and conquer like Catholic knights the empire of human souls. Let it promote that everywhere among us the principles of the holy Roman Catholic Church prevail and that in such a way the Most Holy Heart of Jesus involves the greatest possible number of our brothers in its divine embrace!

⁴⁶⁸ Statutes of the Italian Catholic Action endorsed by the Holy See on 2 October 1923.

⁴⁶⁹ This speech of the pope Pius XI to organized Catholic youth Merz translated and published at the end of the *Golden Book*.

⁴⁷⁰ The Blessed Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, was a member of the Eagle Association and had great respect toward the *Golden Book* before he began his theological studies. In his letters to his fiancée he calls it "pure gold". Merz's desire from the concluding sentences of the Foreword was fully realized in the Blessed Cardinal Stepinac. See at length the words of the Blessed Cardinal Stepinac in Ivan Merz, *Collected Works*, 3rd volume, Zagreb, 2011, p. 277. (in Croatian)



Eagle company “Kačić” which was active in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb from 1919 until 1929. Ivan often gave lectures to this group. In the middle (sitting) is the Jesuit Fr. Bruno Foretić, the spiritual director of the company. The picture was taken in 1929, immediately before the abolition of the Eagle organization on the part of the Belgrade regime.

THE MOST RECENT MIRACLES IN LOURDES

from 20 until 28 August 1924

*An extensive text about the pilgrimage to Lourdes in August 1924 and about the most recent miracles which happened during this pilgrimage can certainly be classified among diary notes. He joined the 52nd French national pilgrimage to Lourdes which took place from the 20th until 28th August 1924. Merz published this text as a direct witness, in a diary form, describing exactly the happenings, on which date (sometimes also the hour) when they occurred. Merz published this diary review of the events in Lourdes in five parts in the Zagreb weekly Catholic Paper (in Croatian)⁴⁷¹, and then the same year as a brochure under the title *The Most Recent Miracles in Lourdes*. The same text was translated into German and published in Osijek in German press as a special brochure.⁴⁷²*

The fact that this article was published firstly in the Catholic Paper, the official organ of the Zagreb Archdiocese, shows not only its actuality and value, but also the respect which the author enjoyed on the part of the official Church hierarchy, thanks to which he got the opportunity, as a Catholic layman, to publish his works in the then most important official paper of the Archdiocese.

This diary presentation of the pilgrimage to Lourdes and the description of miraculous cures we published in full in the 2nd Volume of his Collected Works. For this reason, we do not publish it here, but direct the reader to this source.⁴⁷³ Here, we publish only Merz’s Introduction in which he explains the purpose of writing of these articles.

⁴⁷¹ CATHOLIC PAPER, No. 37, 11 Sept 1924, pp. 441–444; No. 38, 18 Sept 1924, pp. 460–461; No. 39, 25 Sept 1924, pp. 477–480; No. 40, 2 Oct 1924, pp. 489–491; No. 41, 9 Oct 1924, pp. 503–506. (in Croatian)

⁴⁷² Christliche Volkszeitung, 1925, Osijek. – *Brochure: Die neuesten Wunder in Lourdes. Tagebuch eines Laien während französischer Nationalpilgerfahrt vom 20. bis 28. VIII. 1924.* – Verlag der Christlichen Volkszeitung, Osijek, 1925. (in German)

⁴⁷³ Ivan Merz, *Sabrana djela*, 2. svezak, Zagreb, 2011., str. 306–333.

INTRODUCTION

*"And he that saw it bears witness
and his witness is true"
John 19:35*

Personal impressions on the occasion of the 52nd French national pilgrimage from 20 until 28 August 1924. A detailed description of the Office for medical examinations. How a miracle happens. How the physicians confirm it. Five miraculous cures. What the healed ones say.

This presentation of events at Lourdes does not have literary pretensions. These are excerpts from a diary of a pilgrim, a layman who tries to present as simply as possible what he himself saw and in such a way to act upon those who were not fortunate enough to convince themselves in person about the great events happening in Lourdes – about the miracles. The writer of these lines states with regret that he is not a physician, because otherwise he could in a much more thorough way understand the magnificence of divine intervention. He has also tried to present as accurately as possible what he saw. (...) We hope that this presentation will convince many readers about the strict rules observed by the Office for medical examinations which, on the occasion of the 52nd French national pilgrimage, declared only 5 of 17 miracles as “healings which surpass the forces of nature”. (...)

(See the continuation in 2nd Vol. of the Collected Works of Ivan Merz, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 307-333 – in Croatian)



Patients in front of the Grotto of apparitions in Lourdes

IMPRESSIONS ABOUT THE FRENCH NOBILITY

Argent – France, 15 September 1924

Another text of a diary character is Ivan's report of the visit and several days' stay in mid-September 1924 with the French noble family De Montbel in Argent in France. Merz never published this text during his lifetime. It was preserved in manuscript form in his Archive, as he wrote it. With his extraordinary gift of observation of even the minutest detail, he gave us an interesting description of the profile and social situation of the nobility of his time in France.

Argent, 15 September 1924 – (27 years and 9 months)

I was invited here by Mrs. Marguerite de Montbel, a countess, wife of Charles de Montbel. A purely monarchic noble family which played a rather important role at the time of the French monarchy. During the reign of Louis XVI, the ancestors of this family were governors of Berry, prefects of Toulouse. Their great-grandfather was the minister of finance of Charles X and went with him – if I rightly remember – into exile. Their grandfather was also in exile for many years with the Count of Chambord in Frohusdorf.

I am glad that I came into such a milieu; only now I can fully understand those French Catholics who are of a monarchic disposition. For them Catholicism and monarchy are two inseparable notions. They are Catholics, sincere Catholics and hate the French Republic. All that is evil stems from the Republic, every good comes from the Monarchy. A general right of vote is bad; so is the mandatory schooling. The latter was introduced in order that everyone can read the newspapers, by means of which people will be poisoned. The Republic allowed the unification of Germany, which the French monarchy would never have allowed. Had the Russian Tzar been energetic and hanged the Bolsheviks, revolution would never have gained ground in Russia. Louis XVI should have done the same. Germany should be broken into pieces. France ought to have a strong army. The French revolution confiscated the property of the Church and the nobility, it is evil incarnate.

These are the main thoughts of these monarchists. They hold that France will not be at peace until it has a king who will impose peace and order to his subordinates. Pope Leon XIII gave bad advice to the French to ally with the Republic. He was under the influence of Cardinal Rampolla.

For a long time, I tried to find out what is the profession of these noblemen; how do they earn their daily bread. I still haven't come to a positive result. I think they are waiting for the king who will nominate them ministers, governors, deputies... In such a way, they will regain their reputation, money and will be able to embellish their castles, support the arts. In the meantime, they spend their time hunting, drawing, playing music... I don't know if this fills their whole life; but these few days that I have been here I noticed how one day they go to an uncle on "goûter" – tea and cakes, then they play the piano, talk about various books and works of art. The master of the house shows his pictures, drawings – hunting motifs presented with a lot of humor, and everyone says: "*c'est charmant, ravissant – wonderful, marvellous.*" Then they admire an old wardrobe in the Louis XVI style and a bronze pitcher and washbowl with which the king Charles X was baptized. Mr. Gastone Lemaire, a well-known French musician played on the piano "*Vous dansez marquise*" or some dance in Louis XVI style and with his music illustrated the 18th century court life with its delicate, powdered marquises and princesses, with all the conventional rhythmic of their dances and bows, with all the nostalgic aura of the happy ones in this world who feel best the transience of temporal joys.

These are the feelings in which the aristocracy here lives. And they are all loyal to the Catholic Church; they have a great respect for the priests and many of them receive the Communion daily. Their girls walk bare-armed, or with very, very short sleeves, dance

American dances and do not feel all the contrast between their dress and the religion which they profess. In the speech and manner one can see that these girls in pagan dress have very beautiful souls.

Their upbringing is fine-tuned; they know how to respond to every word and remark, admire everything, never say anything bad of anyone, serve at the table and eat apples with knife and fork.

And all this colorful folk ride in automobiles all the time, prepare hunts to the *Monseigneur* from Orleans, *a son altesse imperiale du Brésil* – to his highness, the former emperor of Brazil, study the chronology of the house of Orleans, etc. And when the conversation steers to elections, hatred of the Republic becomes obvious, as well as despair that in Argent out of 500 votes, 200 were for the communists. Where do they get the money for their lives? I think this is income from the enormous lands which they possess. But how do they collect this income? Nothing is cultivated. Everything is in decline, withers away. On the places where once there were fountains and where hundreds of rabbits were bred and sent to Paris, today there is nothing.

And looking at all this I understand to an extent the French revolution which equated the nobility and the clergy and destroyed both. I also understand the present-day anti-clericalism of the French people which equates the rehabilitation of the Church with the rehabilitation of the social reactionaries – large estates, carefree life of the aristocracy and a deadly, hard life of the peasants and workers.

God our Lord allows revolutions in order to establish in such a way his social kingdom among the people.

The social foundations on which, it seems to me, the life of the French aristocracy rests is truly pagan. They don't seem to notice that they are obliged *ex iustitia* – for the sake of justice – to use and cultivate their land, be in every way the refuge of the people which surrounds them. So many empty halls in the castle, and none serves for people's associations; whether youth societies, or for the purpose of catechization, cooperatives and the like. And these bare-armed Catholic girls play tennis, ride in cars, go hunting, dance tango, and do not think of their comrades in the village who need help. No wonder the entire population is against the nobility and that they vote against the candidates who support the nobility and the Church! No wonder the godless assume power and expel the nuns from Alençon and Evian. Aren't the Catholics to blame in the first place if they experience political defeats?



*Castle Argent in France in which Ivan Merz stayed in September of 1924
at the invitation of the noble family De Montbel*

In spite of this reactionary social spirit, I must stress that this nobility is the carrier of many positive values. This is in the first place the cult of family traditions. Every

member of the family has a deep reverence towards the great-great-grandfathers and great-grandfathers, grandfather and grandmother, the great-uncles. All of them were aristocrats who played an important role in the political life of France. Many among them were keeping diaries, so that it is not difficult to imagine the period in which they lived. The male ancestors had many virtues, and the foremost among them was loyalty to the king. O, there is nothing more touching than to be alongside the king, to go to exile together with the king, looking how a king dies with dignity. And the mothers of these aristocrats were real saints. They brought up their children in an exemplary manner; they taught them drawing, literature, grammar... they took care of every smallest thing. They lived in a simple room not unlike a cell from which they almost never went out. Some mothers educated their grandchildren. So, for instance, the countess de Villeneuve tells me that her grandmother (or mother, I don't remember precisely) studied Latin in her sixtieth year in order to be able to teach her grandson that subject. Even the current generation inherited something of the sanctity; some wear hair-cloth, others flagellate themselves.

Here there is one small lady dressed in dark grey – Miss Louise de Souliac. She has something of a nun in her: long sleeves, closed neck – a real Catholic. She was on her way of becoming a nun, but her brother was killed leaving four small children behind him, and she took it upon herself to bring them up. Everyone looks at her with awe. She managed to bring up the children; one ended the military academy in St. Cyr and recently became a lieutenant, etc. This little lady sometimes disappears, goes to Paris or somewhere else. Everybody thinks she is a nun living in the world a worldly life; a nun who took her vows and who reports on her life and everything she spends to her superiors. This is the order of *Mary's Girls* founded by the Jesuits, a branch of the *Society of Helpers of the Holy Souls*.

Countess de Montbel also has something odd in herself: some mixture of saintliness, esthetic and social-reactionary. She receives Communion every day, plays the piano, reads various works of literature and is able to entertain a conversation on any topic. She visits the sick, honors enormously the priests and knows many "saints". She is a revolutionary in her milieu, an opponent of *Action française*⁴⁷⁴, opposes the terrorist methods of fascism, and advocates an eight-hour working day. In a debate, she takes the side of the workers, "*pour le peuple qui est admirable* – for the people who are admirable", keeps correspondence with anarchists and tries to help wherever she can. Along with that, her sleeves end above the elbows, she has numerous dresses, jewelry on her chest and neck. This mixture of saintliness with the anti-Christian traditions of luxury and fashion is beyond comprehension.

In Bonnée I visited the counts de Rousseau – the lady is a German princess Isenburg from Hessen, a relative of the emperor Wilhelm. In their house, there is a chapel with the Most Holy, all grown-up girls are bare-armed and on the walls one sees the pictures from the *Ancien Régime*⁴⁷⁵ with women and girls having bare shoulders and visible breasts. Maybe this is one of the reasons of the tragedy of the French nation which is dying out; wherever you look, nearly everywhere you find empty hearths. There are no children. There are no workers who will cultivate the land. Nobility, which could play a major role in the renewal of France, seems to be its greatest enemy. They possess the faith in Jesus Christ, they have all the intellectual means at their disposal, but still they can do nothing because they are the slaves of the social setup, slaves of human concerns, slaves of fashion. They always seek to be on top, to be treated as an elite class by everybody, but as the present-day elite class walks bare-armed, they also adopt the customs which disorganize family life.

⁴⁷⁴ *Action française* – a political, nationalist and royalist movement of the extreme right in France in the first half of the 20th century. It was condemned by the pope Pius XI in 1926.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ancien régime* – the old regime. A social-political and administrative system during the time of the Monarchy, before the French revolution.

NOTES FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1 December 1924

From the spiritual exercises, which Ivan performed by the end of November and beginning of December 1924, in his Archive only the decisions which he wrote on two small sheets of paper are preserved. There is also a date. From these decisions, we see how the Spirit of God motivates him to an ever more perfect life, to attaining mastery over himself, to an ascetic and penitential life which he tried to live since his student days.

Strive for perfection in the performing of various tasks.
Execute perfectly the ordinary things.
Mortify the body so that health is “a little bit” affected.
Sincerely love everything that is harder. This makes you similar to Christ the Savior.
O, how come you are not afraid of God’s punishment in hell!
Sleep in the afternoon, get up early.
Reserve Sundays for mental meditation.
Achieve in everything the self-denial of the crucified Christ.
“Once I demanded from you more, and now I demand only this.
You see how my Heart is full of love.”
Do not laugh during Lent nor give a motive for laughter.
If possible, walk the streets without glasses.
Weep over your sins often.
Do not say unpleasant things to others.
Be in the church 15 minutes before the mass (if possible).
Speak with people as if they were kings.
Learn to serve at the altar.

SPIRITUAL PERSONAL PROFILE

Responses of Ivan Merz to the questions in a survey

*In 1925 Dr. Dragutin Kniewald was preparing a religious-moral handbook for young men under the title *The Catholic Pupil (in Croatian)*. For this purpose, he conducted a survey on religious and moral life among two hundred Croatian young men. The aim of the survey was to respond in the best possible way to the needs of a young man who strives for higher values.⁴⁷⁶ Dr. Kniewald also asked Dr. Ivan Merz, his friend, to respond to the questions in the survey. The survey was anonymous, but as Merz handed his responses to Dr. Kniewald in person, he preserved them. They were very useful to him later when composing the biography of Ivan Merz. Before his death, Dr. Kniewald donated to the Ivan Merz’s Archive Merz’s original responses to the survey, written on 34 sheets. The serial number in front of every question relates to the number of the survey sheet on many of which there were several questions. Sheet No. 8 has no answer, and sheet No. 9 is not preserved. These responses by Ivan Merz to the questions of the survey are of extraordinary value because they provide us with yet another insight into his soul. We gave to this chapter the title “*Spiritual personal profile*”, because here we find*

⁴⁷⁶ Dr. Kniewald wrote the same handbook for girls under the title *Catholic Schoolgirl*.

information we do not have from any other source. In the introductory sheet, Ivan noted that he answered “spontaneously, quickly, without a break”. This note is important, because it guarantees the authenticity of the responses which were written spontaneously, without embellishment or corrections; he wrote what was foremost on his mind as an expression of experience which was permanently present in his spirit.

1. Am I a member of any society, organization, congregation? Which one?

– Congregation,⁴⁷⁷ Eagle⁴⁷⁸.

Which of my needs are met in this society?

– Congregation: joint prayer, lectures on spiritual topics. Eagle: Catholic social apostolate.

Do I have any complaints about this society?

– No.

2. Why did I sometimes omit Sunday Mass?

(No response)

3. What was I doing during Mass (prayed, thought – about what? daydreamt, sung?)?

– Prayed the holy Mass.⁴⁷⁹

4. What do I pray in the morning and the evening?

– In the morning: I meditate 3/4 of an hour. Evening: rosary, conscience examination, preparing material for meditation for the following day.

5. What is my greatest mistake?

– Precipitatio (rashness) in prayer and work.

How did I become aware of it?

– During spiritual exercises.

6. What benefit do I derive from Confession?

– To overcome my mistakes more easily.

What is hardest for me to say in Confession?

– The sins against holy chastity.

7. *How do I prepare myself for Holy Communion (From a prayer book? Which one? Without a prayer book? How?)?*

– By meditating on the text of the Holy Mass, or a text from the Old or New Testament.

How many times a year do I receive Holy Communion?

– Daily.

10. *What is spiritual life?*

– Meditation on divine truths; participation in the inner life of God; in a way, becoming God.

Do I need spiritual life?

– Yes.

Why?

⁴⁷⁷ Mary's Congregation – Catholic association for the promotion of spiritual life.

⁴⁷⁸ The Eagle Catholic Organization for young people where he was among the leaders.

⁴⁷⁹ This relates to Merz's active prayerfully following of the holy Mass from his French and Latin missal which he carried with him every day when going to the Mass in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.

– Because without it I would cease to exist. Without it everything is hell.

11. Which books do I prefer to read?

– Philosophical (scholastic) and theological.

12. Which books were of greatest use to me until now?

– Donat: Ethica, Breviary, Missal, Old and New Testament.

What usefulness did I derive from these books?

– I got rid of the esthetic-literary view of life and started observing life as it is in reality, in the Creator's concept.

13. Which books harmed me the most until now?

– Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment* (when I was 20).

Can you elaborate on this harm?

– I fantasized that I should be saving prostitutes, and I closely escaped serious harm.

14. What was the effect of novels which I have read so far?

– They significantly broadened my horizon (I only read works of literary value), but in terms of philosophical-theological truths in them I mostly found a void.

What was the effect of novels on my companions?

– The same as on me, because they read good novels.

15. Which pious book did I read?

– A lot of classical works from theological (ascetic) literature.

Which benefit did I derive from this?

– Only the classical works (St. Francis de Sales, Scheeben, St. Augustine) gave me solid guidelines for the spiritual life. Maybe in purgatory I will have to read, as punishment, those books which are usually called pious.

16. What magazines and newspapers do I read?

– All the Catholic ones, French and Italian.

17. How did I attend to my religious duties during the holidays?

– Well.

The holy Mass on Sunday?

– Well.

Confession and Communion?

– Well.

Morning and evening prayer?

– Well.

Parties and entertainment where I found myself?

– Well.

18. Did I ever do something on account of others, that I otherwise wouldn't do?

What? Why?

– I don't remember.

19. Why do young men love to go to the cinema so much?

– Instruction.

What is it that they like there?

Instruction.

What is it that they don't like?

Lewdness, banditry.

Of what use is the cinema for them?

Instructive.

What harms them in the cinema?

Lewdness, banditry.

20. *Why do young men love to go to dances?*

– In high school a pleasant, warm feeling in female company.

What do they like at the dances?

Girls.

What do they dislike at the dances?

Dust.

What is the usefulness of dances for them?

They learn how to behave towards ladies and girls, when they don't have the opportunity to learn it in other places.

Is there any harm in dances for them?

Dance leads to erotic arousal at certain moments.

21. *What do I think of modern dances (tango, shimmy, one-step, foxtrot etc.)?*

– When I only observe the dancing of modern dances (e.g. in the Biškupović's school), I gather that a normally developed young man must become sexually aroused. It is a fact that girls in dance schools have skirts which come up to their knees and that developed female bodies in dance, where different muscles are activated, cannot remain cold. If a young man, maybe with the time, learns to observe this play of the muscles and female bodies, and gets used to the touch of warm, soft, female flesh below the fingers when the upper part of the leg unwittingly touches the girl's leg, if this, as I say, with time ceases to have an effect on the young man, then I hold that that is bad; because the procreation of mankind demands a certain sexual arousal in a man, not apathy. One gynecologist in Zagreb told me that modern dances have a very harmful effect on the normal development of female sexual organs.

It is my opinion that Catholics must speak out against these modern dances; because if they think that one mortal sin exposes a man to danger of missing the goal for which he is created, then, consequently, we should renounce many of the allowed things only to safeguard ourselves from such a great misfortune.

Did I ever dance them?

– No.

22. *Do I have religious doubts?*

– No.

23. *How would I prefer the work in Catholic organizations to take place, for boys and girls separately, or jointly?*

– Separately.

In regular meetings?

Separately.

In special solemn academies?

Possibly for important reasons under certain conditions jointly.

On walks and trips?

Jointly, but escorted by the parents.

Why?

Because falling in love too early is injurious for the development of personality.

24. *How would in my opinion or experience such a joint work affect:*
– (for high school, retrospectively): The work in the organization: it would be paralyzed.

My outer demeanor?

I would take care of my exterior and would try to please.

My spiritual life?

It would be paralyzed.

The schoolgirls?

They would fall in love.

25. *Have I been in school together with girls?*

In elementary school? – Yes.

In high school? – No.

At the university? – Yes.

26. *How did I behave towards my female colleagues?*

– University: well.

How did they behave towards me?

– Well.

How did this companionship affect me?

– Indifferent from the esthetic viewpoint which leads to falling in love.

On my male companions?

– They spoke erotically about them.

On my female companions?

– Many became tomboys.

27. *What is my general attitude towards young women?*

– Indifferent.

What is their attitude towards me?

– Likewise.

28. *What would be a desirable attitude for me towards young women?*

– Indifferent

How would I like them to behave towards me?

–Indifferently.

29. *What role in my young life does the striving for the preservation of a pure heart play?*

– If there had been no special protection from God, maybe I would have been ruined; a terribly hard battle.

30. *What is, in my opinion or experience, the safest means for the preservation of a pure life?*

– Enthusiasm for the holy Church which is based on an understanding of the faith. Daily Holy Communion, systematic daily subjugation of the body (in food, quick rising from bed, regular physical exercise at least 10 minutes daily) and not seeking female company.

31. *What is in my opinion or experience the greatest threat to a pure life?*

– Fashion which exposes the breasts, short skirts with transparent stockings...

32. *What influence have these exerted on my religious and moral life:*

The school? – Elementary: bad (A Muslim country). – High school: bad. – University: good.

Colleagues? – None.

Teachers? – Religion teacher: disastrous. A lay Catholic saved me for eternity. Liberals: they peppered my head with so many lies, that maybe I haven't gotten rid of all of them.

Sports? – Bicycle: brilliant. Skiing: even better. Horse: good. Ice skates: very good. Tennis: likewise. Football: When it is well organized – good. Tourism: good. (But everything must be measured.)

Societies? – good.

33. *To what vocation do I intend to dedicate myself?*

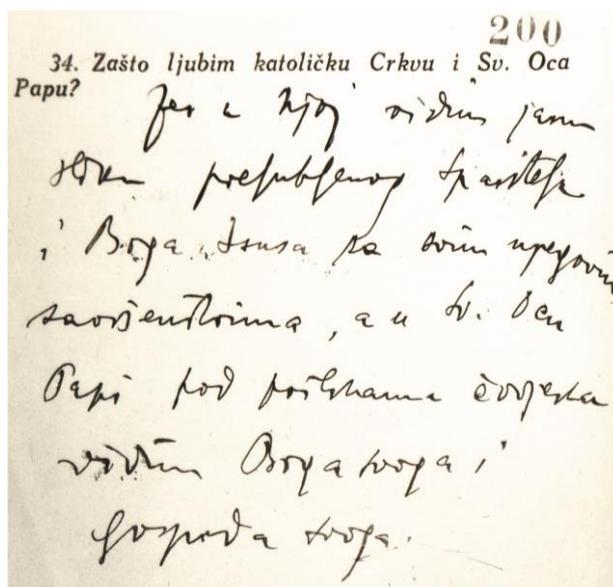
– High school teacher.

Why?

– Because through it one can do the most for Catholic Action.

34. *Why do I love the Catholic Church and the Holy Father?*

– Because in it I see a clear image of the most beloved Savior and God Jesus in all his perfections, and in the Holy Father – the Pope under the guise of a man I see my God and my Lord.



200
34. Zašto ljubim katoličku Crkvu i Sv. Oca Papu?
Jer u Nj' vidim jenu stvar prepublenu i svetlu: Boga, Isusa sa svim njegovim savjetovima, a u Sv. Ocu Papi pod prikrivanjem čovjeka vidim Boga i Isusa i njegovu stvoru.

Facsimile of Ivan Merz's response to the final, 34th question in the survey

In question 32, Ivan's answer that his religion teacher had a disastrous effect on his religious and moral life, while a lay Catholic saved him for eternity might at first sight confuse and surprise. In high school for a certain period of time his teacher was a priest whose life was not fully in accordance with his priestly vocation. The lay Catholic who saved him for eternity and whom Ivan mentions in the survey was his teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković

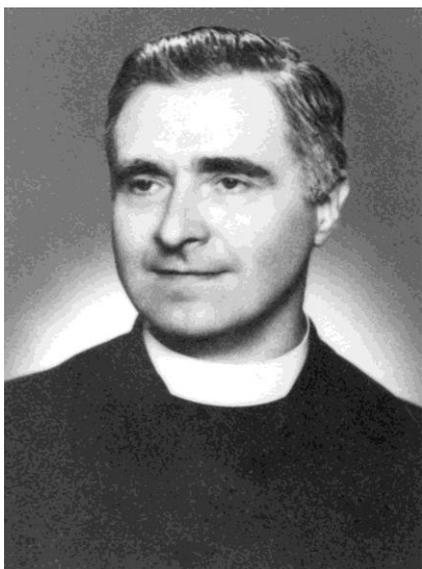
We ought to note, however, that the answer about the “disastrous” effect of the religion teacher Ivan wrote at the time (1925) when he appreciated more than anyone else, the priestly dignity and its spiritual mission in Catholic societies.

“I was a young priest”, tells Fr. S. Flodin, SJ, “when one day I met Merz on Jurišićeva Street in Zagreb. We were not acquainted personally. I was in my priestly attire and Merz greeted me with great respect. To say that I remained impressed is too little; I was surprised, I was beside myself with admiration. Never before or later did I receive such a greeting from a Christian layman. It is apparent that Merz held priests in highest esteem.”

Dr. Marko Klarić, the first vice-postulator in the process for Ivan Merz, knew him and was his co-worker in apostolic work. He used to say to his friends: “We will never realize enough who Merz was. He wouldn’t allow a single ill-founded criticism of a priest to be said in his presence. He would then say: “Let’s not speak like that! Who will absolve us, who will give us Holy Communion!”

Dr. Milivoj Mostovac, Ivan’s close co-worker in the work with youth, gives us this event from memory: “We who worked in Catholic organizations were closely connected with the priests. With Merz, there was a friendship, but always connected with a certain respect. He always gave precedence to the priestly spiritual mission. Even to a priest who would compromise his vocation in private life, Merz would show a great respect due to his elevated service.”⁴⁸⁰

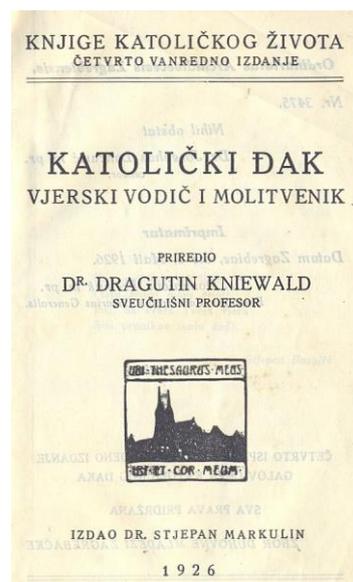
* * *



Prof. dr. DRAGUTIN KNI EWALD, PhD (1889-1979), priest, professor of theology at the Theological Faculty in Zagreb, expert in liturgy and historian of art actively participated in the organization and activities of various organizations of Catholic Action in Croatia. Together with Ivan Merz, with whom he was close friend and co-worker, he educated the Croatian youth, especially in the Eagle Organization. Along with numerous books and studies in the field of theology and liturgy which he published as a professor of theology, in 1932 he published the first biography of Ivan Merz.

He also wrote two prayer books – guidelines for Catholic youth. He was the initiator of the liturgical renewal in Croatia in the 20th century. As a member of the Commission for the Liturgy in the preparation for the Second Vatican Council, his work on documented promotion of the memory of Ivan Merz helped Merz’s process of beatification.

Front covers of the religious guide and prayer book Catholic Pupil, which Dr. Dragutin Kniewald prepared for young people with the help of Bl. Ivan Merz.



⁴⁸⁰ All these three testimonies about Merz's respect toward the priests are published in the book: B. Nagy, *Warrior from the White Mountains – Ivan Merz*, (in Croatian), FTI, Zagreb, 1971, pp. 276–277.

NOTES FROM SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Zagreb, 27 – 29 March 1926

From these spiritual exercises, too, which Ivan performed in the spring of 1926, precious notes have been preserved which convey to us the contents of his meditations and the steps he took for the advancement of his spiritual life and his ascent toward sanctity. In the spiritual exercises that he performed, Ivan made decisions which he later implemented and tried to put into practice in his life. This was particularly emphasized in these spiritual exercises where his decisions took a very concrete form. In addition, in these notes we find reflection of his great apostolic engagement in the Eagle Organization, as well as in the implementing of Catholic Action. Comparing these notes with those from the spiritual exercises three years prior, we can see a great advancement on the path to sanctity.

At the end of every meditation, Ivan underlined his decisions, thus wanting to emphasize their importance for his future life. Later on, he copied these decisions on four smaller sheets of paper which are preserved and kept in his Archive. This surely served him to remember them more easily and to be able to carry them in his prayer book or missal which he used daily.

Saturday, 27 March 1926 – 8 a.m.

The Lord created us to praise him. This comes first. Angels praise him without stopping, all nature praises him. We must praise him too.

Everything else is secondary. This is the aim why he created us, otherwise he wouldn't have created us at all. This is why he is keeping us alive all the time.

TO RECTIFY:

Praise the Lord for the brilliance in which he is manifested in nature. Think, speak about this.

Praise him for his benevolences, the holy Church, the saints, the Most Holy Eucharist.

Motivate HOS⁴⁸¹ that all its members might praise the Lord. HOS is for the sake of members, and not the other way around – create the preconditions so that the members may fulfil their life's task: to praise the Lord.

Saturday, 27 March 1926 – 5 p.m.

Because sin is the greatest evil, actually the only evil, as it deprives us of the only good – God, it follows that we ought to hate sin more than anything else and fight against it with all our might. The Eagle Organization has the task to destroy sin. If we fail to achieve that its members live without mortal sin, the entire organization loses its meaning, because what is the use of gaining the whole world, if one loses the aim for which we were created. A minimum of one Confession per month, as prescribed by the Golden Book, ought to be a solemn manifestation of the fight of the eagles against this only evil, against sin.

The Eagle Organization is a great benefaction for the members because it gives them the precondition to save their soul. In order for all the members to get to know as best as they can the goal for which they were created - laudare, revereri, servire Deum⁴⁸², the Eagle Organization would do the greatest possible service if it organized spiritual

⁴⁸¹ HOS – Croatian Eagle Association

⁴⁸² Latin: praise, worship and serve God.

exercises for them. A spiritual director in a society is the proof of the limitless love of the Church toward the eternal salvation of the eagles; we ought to introduce a systematic teaching of the catechism. Therefore, in the first instance and before anything else, the Eagle Associations must pay attention to the inner, intensive work. Every member should be educated in such a manner that his every act corresponds to the three-fold aim for which he was created.

Only the personalities educated in this manner are able to act socially and apostolically, i.e. to create conditions for other people that they might realize the three-fold purpose of their lives and order their lives accordingly. An eagle who doesn't know the threefold purpose of his life is meaningless.



*Interior of the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb to which Ivan came to Mass daily and received the Holy Communion. Here he performed his spiritual exercises.
His tomb is here today, on the right side.*

Sunday, 28 March 1926 – 8 a.m.

On my death bed, I would like to know that I have always been the messenger of the Great King, i.e. in the presence of God, aware that praise, honor and service to God are the only important things, and everything else is mere vanity. Therefore, if within my self-chosen profession, I was unconcentrated, gloomy, forgetting the purpose of my work, there proceeds the following:

Decision:

All the work must take place without rush, with a tempo and rhythm.

At a decided time, I ought to jump from the bed in a leap. (better to decide on getting up later than not to get up quickly).

Before meditation measure the time precisely (duration – without hurry!)

Walking along the street at a moderate tempo, eyes looking in front; my thoughts are preoccupied with the morning meditation.

In the teachers' room, do only what is most necessary. During the rest of the time, speak with other teachers to make them develop love for Christ.

Enter the class slowly and recollected, knowing in advance which subject matter I ought to cover.

Apart from great urgency, do not eschew the examination of conscience at noon. It should last 5 minutes. Before that pray the Angelus. Pray for Drago and Biserka⁴⁸³
Speak with the parents with recollection; especially with Mother.

Do not hurry with individual pupils.
Evening examination of consciousness should last at least 10 minutes (Control the last note from Confession).

Sunday, 28 March 1926 – 10:15 a.m.

The youth in inter-confessional associations is exposed to danger. Sin which carries with it eternal torment passes there unnoticed. Not only that, but the youth gets the opportunity to gamble away the purpose for which it was created.

If only the bishops with all boldness warned people of this greatest danger! We are speaking of the highest good, and they were entrusted to preserve their flock from this greatest, unspeakable calamity.

The Croatian Eagle Association must draw the attention of its members to this greatest evil among the people – sin. We must all be permeated by the consciousness of this horrible evil. In order to kindle the flame of the apostolate in the souls of the eagles for the battle against sins which surround us everywhere, a program of spiritual exercises should be prepared and as of this year all spiritual directors should be obligated to hold at least partial spiritual exercises in all societies for all the members.

The essence of every apostolate must be the battle against sin. This is the main framework into which all other kinds of the apostolate fit – the religious, educational, political, economic and social.

He who battles in the lines of the Church has only one enemy – sin, everything else is indifferent and should be used for the suppression of sin and promotion of the salvation of souls.

Sunday, 28 March 1926 – 2:45 p.m.

Decision: Always get up on time to be in the church a quarter of an hour before Mass, in order to be able to complete the meditation in peace until Holy Communion. Remain in the church until the priest leaves the altar, if the Communion is being given after Mass. If not, remain in the church at least 5 minutes after the Mass. Get up at 5:45 at the latest, under the condition that I have had at least 6 hours of sleep.

Sunday, 28 March 1926 – 5 p.m.

Fighting under the command of the crucified King I must be crucified until the end of my life. Jesus' fiancée is crucified through all the centuries; I must also participate in this glorious similarity. Life without a cross – comfortable – should be the greatest shame for me. Therefore, I must be happy and consider the state of a soldier of Jesus to be my normal state, and not protest as I did until now – difficult professional duties which obstruct private study and work.

Decision: perform my professional duties conscientiously and consider this to be the cross of my life, my daily crucifixion which brings blessing in the work for the salvation of souls in Catholic Action.

⁴⁸³ Drago – Dragan Marošević, Ivan's seriously ill friend (TB). Biserka – Biserka Brajša (Ivan's god-daughter) from a well-known Catholic family Brajša. On the request of her parents, Ivan was her god-father at baptism.

With the purpose of perseverance when faced with difficulties and bodily labors, I will abstain from judging myself but will ask the spiritual director for advice.

Monday, 29 March 1926 – 8 a.m.

The Savior in Nazareth until his 30th year carried out entirely technical work. He was a carpenter. Someone else could have done that job. He did not come to the world to be a carpenter, but nevertheless he was doing that job nearly all his life.

Instruction for me: the Savior is giving me an example that I must submit myself to purely technical work, the work which someone else could accomplish, maybe much better than me (school). Renunciation of my individuality and discharging a duty which does not correspond to my specific individuality is necessary to conquer my own will, *superbiam vitae* (the arrogance of life). Therefore, I must go on carrying the cross of my professional duties with joy and earn my daily bread in this manner. Let this fulfilment of the Father's will be a pledge for a blessing in the work of Catholic Action.

Monday, 29 March 1926 – 10:15 a.m.

Among the people among whom I wish to be active, I must behave as they do. Before his public service, the Savior was baptized by John, as every other sinner. He did this to give us an example; likewise, among all the people where I want to be active, I must present myself as equal to them in all their weaknesses.

Before I go among the people, I must master three concupiscences⁴⁸⁴, especially the first one.

All new organizations must be warned that by becoming participants of Catholic Action they must be prepared for suffering, weeping, injustice. Blessed are the soldiers of Jesus because they suffer, weep, sustain injustice. The spirit of comfort and striving for purely earthly happiness is the spirit of this world.

I must often bring mother something that will make her happy. I must come when she calls me and present this as a sacrifice for her (even if I look childish).⁴⁸⁵ The altar of Our Lady!

Advice of the spiritual director: on Sundays regularly go to two masses. Dedicate myself to parents, friends (light conversation). One hour on Sunday evening reserve for adoration.

Beware of rashness.

In myself unceasingly stimulate the acts of love, towards God, Savior. In God I move like a fish in e water (This will protect me from rashness, give me peace and the ability to awaken love in others).

In my lectures, it is obvious (especially to the intellectuals) that they are really bad, unprepared. What seems to be enthusiasm is actually tension. When I give a public lecture, I must speak calmly, really prepare myself well. At least prepare myself by meditation. Not to speak off hand. If this is not fulfilled, decline the offers for lectures.

I ought not to work after dinner, except reading spiritual literature.

Go to the maid or speak to her only in dire necessity.⁴⁸⁶

Eat only a minimum of cake when there is other nourishing food available.

Before Confession take time to review my actions and thoughts and note how well I kept the above decisions.

⁴⁸⁴ Three concupiscences – passion of the body, passion of the eyes and arrogance of life

⁴⁸⁵ Ivan's mother was gravely ill and was forced to lie in bed.

⁴⁸⁶ Due to mother's illness Ivan's parents had a maid by the name of Katica. After Ivan's and mother's death she married. As Ivan's father remained alone, Katica, together with her husband Ivan Bajić took Ivan's father in their care and he remained in this family until his death.



The first sculpture of the Bl. Ivan Merz was made in 2006 by the sculptor Slaven Miličević for the parish of the Most Holy Trinity in Zagreb, in the Prečko neighborhood. A copy of this statue, thanks to the parish priest Fr. Vjekoslav Meštrić and donor Mr. Jozo Jurić, has been placed also in front of the parish church of Mary's Assumption in Stenjevec as a sign of thanks to the Bl. Ivan Merz for the heroic act of defense of this church on 21 November 1926. On that day, a group of non-Catholics tried to occupy and desecrate this church. Having learnt of this plan, Ivan Merz organized thirty young men, members of the Eagle Catholic organization who, under his leadership, and risking to shed their blood successfully defended the church. At this place, Bl. Ivan Merz was prepared to die a martyr's death for the defense of the Catholic faith and the holy



Parish church in Stenjevec which Ivan Merz defended in 1926

LIBER LUMINUM 1927

In Ivan's Archive, another text has been preserved to which he gave the title Liber Luminum (The Book of Enlightenments). The text is very short, only one page, containing two dates. He had the intention of noting down inner spiritual enlightenments which he got during prayers, meditations or reading spiritual books. It is obvious that his numerous duties, and then his illness, prevented him from continuing to note down his inner experiences.

Began: 17 December 1927 in Zagreb

17 December – These days I derived great spiritual benefit from meditating on hell and Judgement Day, Peter's sin, the story of the Good Shepherd, and Savior as King, especially the King of hearts. All according to St. Ignatius, in Meschler's interpretation.

20 December – At the table (food) think mostly on the morning meditation; renew the impression in the course of the morning and behave in that spirit.

* * *

SEVERAL DECISIONS FROM THE LAST PERIOD OF LIFE

Another text without a date is also preserved in the Archive, and by its contents it belongs to this period of his life. These are in fact several decisions which he took in case his health gets better. During the entire year of 1927 Ivan was seriously ill and therefore we place this text in this period.

If I regain full health, during the coming holidays I shall:

1. Perform 8-day secluded spiritual exercises;
2. Make a recollection once a month;
3. Once a week make a trip for bodily refreshment.

DIARY

Zagreb, 21 January – 27 March 1928

The last Diary entries



These are the last pages of Ivan's Diary. He wrote them in the Paris notebook in which the last previous entry was dated 4 November 1921. Since that time, until 21 January 1928 more than six years have passed during which time Ivan didn't officially keep his Diary, apparently due to lack of time. On these few pages, he left us valuable thoughts and facts about his state of mind, spiritual life and circumstances in which he lived prior to his death, which came several months later.

Everything to the glory of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus!

Zagreb, 21 January 1928 – (31 years and 1 month)

Helps a priest friend who is in trouble

(At the beginning, Ivan gives a brief description of a case of a respectable priest, his friend, whom enemies slandered and tried to ruin his reputation. After this, Merz continues:

He suffers so much because his conscience is very refined (...). As of now, he is relying exclusively on prayer and has relinquished his fate to the little St. Therese of the Child Jesus who worked so much for the priests. Surely, he is intellectually one of the most powerful priest personalities in our country, and he was ready to give his life for the victory of the Catholic Action of the Holy See. However, he never surmised that the Lord would seek this sacrifice from him. (...) I am convinced that he is innocent and didn't do what they are accusing him of. (...) I think one ought to stretch out to him a helping brotherly arm, wipe the tears from his face and the spittle with which he was spit on.

Zagreb, 8 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

Words of compliment about Msgr. Milan Beluhan, the spiritual director of the Eagles

I am writing because I am convinced that important things are happening around me from which I clearly and factually perceive how the Lord is leading all the details of our life and work. Especially, Msgr. Beluhan⁴⁸⁷ comes across as a saint among us; he is at the service of every one, works for all, never thinking of himself. This is how I imagine a saintly parish priest. Today he detailed to me his plan to set up a *Catholic insurance company* with which he will be able to help many people, finance Lang's Home and a neutral political Catholic daily paper. Bishop Akšamović⁴⁸⁸ received us very cordially and

⁴⁸⁷ Msgr. Milan BELUHAN (1877–1953) was the parish priest of St. Mary's parish in Zagreb and a general spiritual director of the Croatian Eagle Association, and later the Great Crusader Brotherhood and Sisterhood.

⁴⁸⁸ The bishop of Đakovo Antun AKŠAMOVIĆ (1875–1959) was put in charge by the Episcopal Conference for the resolution of the problem which arose within the Croatian Catholic Movement relating to the attempt to extinguish the autonomy of the Croatian Eagle Association and make it a youth branch of the political People's Party. Merz with co-workers fought against such an option because this would harm the basic vision of the Eagle organization which was a politically independent Catholic educational organization for youth, inspired by the principles of pontifical Catholic Action.

maybe the proposal of the Croatian Eagle Association (HOS) according to which our organization should remain autonomous will be accepted.

10 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

Finally, a joint prayer with the parents

Today, for the first time, mom agreed that we pray the rosary together in our family. Tomorrow is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. This is her work. But for this reason, so many illnesses had to pass over me, plus this forthcoming operation of the nose to which I will have to submit myself unless Our Lady helps in other ways.

Zagreb, 13 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

Suffering – the most powerful means for the sanctification and the salvation of souls

A rather great cross is upon us. I contracted a suppurating, acute inflammation of the jaw cavity. Today I had another tooth extracted. Mom is in terrible pain; however, I see that she prays rather gladly. Yesterday we made a kind of vow that when the circumstances allow it, we shall pray the rosary together. Strange: this suffering of ours seems to have produced miracles in mom who now prays with ease the rosary and other prayers. She said that today she prayed about a hundred Our Fathers and Hail Mary's. The experimental proof how suffering is the strongest means to save and sanctify souls. Blessed are the souls who receive with gladness every pain from the hands of the Lord, and united with Jesus submit this pain for the spreading of the Church among souls and within society!

Zagreb, 14 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

Spiritual experience of Fr. J. Vrbaneč

Fr. Vrbaneč⁴⁸⁹ was vomiting blood again. He says, when he looks at all the work which goes in vain, he desires martyrdom. He meditates on the presence of God and how God acts in every microbe and in a special way in each one of us when we suffer. (...)

Zagreb, 15 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

Feels the weight of suffering and of the cross

It is easy to receive the Holy Communion every day and eat at the table with the Lord. Oh, how bitter it is when one is forced to bite and eat the hard wood of the holy Cross! Today yet another tooth was extracted.

Zagreb, 16 February 1928 – (31 years and 2 months)

More about the spiritual experience of Fr. J. Vrbaneč

“How immensely I wish to suffer” – these were the words of the ill Fr. Vrbaneč which he said today. He thinks that there are two currents in the Catholic camp in our country. He sees the seniors as minimalists, i.e. they want to have the minimum which makes them Catholics. He says that the spirit of St. Ignatius is always to strive towards the higher, knowing that in such a way one will achieve something at least. If the goal is set low, almost nothing will be achieved.

⁴⁸⁹ Josip VRBANEK (1882–1945), SJ, a Jesuit, Merz's spiritual director and confessor, writer of his second biography published in 1943. At that time, he was serving in the basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.

Zagreb, 27 March 1928 – (31 years and 3 months)

Admittance of a friend's innocence

In the last entry of his Diary Ivan again mentions his friend, the priest N.N. with whom he commenced these last pages of his Diary and with whose predicament he sincerely sympathized and tried to help him. In the end, he tells us how the situation was resolved:

The affair of Fr. N.N. was resolved in a way that the Archbishop Bauer admitted that he is innocent. (...)

This same priest N.N. whom Ivan was assisting while in trouble and about whom he writes at the beginning of this last part of his Diary, twenty days after Ivan's death, on 30 May 1928 wrote these sentences in his diary:

*"He is gone, the man who was maybe the only one who understood me and whom I understood. He is gone and I am left alone. During his illness, especially in the last days, as well as after his death, in spite of feeble health I did a lot for him. (...) With my visits and attention, I tried to pay him back the debt with which I was indebted to him while he was giving me a helping hand, praying for me and suffering for me in my most difficult moments. He spoke little about himself, but he told me that he knelt in prayer before Our Lady for me, that I am the first after the Pope in his prayers and that he even suffered pain for my sake. (...) They said that I influenced him, that he was only my trumpet. How deadly wrong they are! He influenced me, and I told it to him while he was alive. While I was searching for the path, he already trod it with sure steps and showed it to me, pointing to Catholic Action and generally."*⁴⁹⁰



Building on the Starčević Square in Zagreb, facing the Main Railway Station where Ivan Merz lived with his parents on the second floor to the left. Inside the circle are two windows of Ivan's room.

⁴⁹⁰ The Diary of this priest N.N., Ivan's friend, was given to the Ivan Merz's Archive after his death where it is now kept.

THE LAST VERSION OF THE RULES FOR LIVING Zagreb, 1928

When he was going to the hospital for surgery on 25 April 1928, Ivan took with him four things: his big missal from which he was never separated and with the help of which he followed the Mass every day, his life decisions written by typewriter on a small card, the book of meditations by Fr. Meschler and the rosary. The decisions which he took with him are his last life decisions, i.e. the last version of his rules for living. Although they are not dated, we presume that they must have been written in 1927, during the last spiritual exercises which he made. The fact that he took these decisions with him into the hospital, on the last stop of his earthy voyage, shows us how he tried to remain faithful to the very end to his way of life, a life of complete dedication to God which he was living in the world according to the rules which he composed in cooperation with his spiritual director.

Before every prayer remember the morning meditation.

Eat as few cakes as possible, when there is other food available.

Before every prayer (adoration, meditation) determine its duration.

Do not engage in your work after dinner.

A little secret: Jesus, through Mary I want to love you more and more every day!

(Or: *Bouquet spirituel*.)

As penitence, perform your professional duties as close to perfection as you can.

(As penitence, accept as a regular rule for living to sleep according to your needs only every second day)⁴⁹¹

Receive Communion every day and if possible adore before the most holy Sacrament.

Unconditionally, as penitence, get up fast as if touched by electricity, always and without exception. Get up unconditionally at the time which you decided in the evening (even if you have to rest during the day due to tiredness). Never go to bed for the second time.

At every meal do some penitence for the salvation of souls.

*Qui regulae vivit Deo vivit*⁴⁹²: therefore, do not change your decisions without important reasons.

During Advent, do not give anybody reason to laugh.

Laugh only as a sign of spiritual joy.

When you use technical means for the spreading of the glory of God, be at least on the level on which the liberals are (with the same needs) when they work for earning money.

Your speech and behavior towards your neighbor must support and not destroy his contemplation.

Be as orderly as possible.

*Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*⁴⁹³

With people who are not personally guilty for not being Catholics, speak in the spirit of *animae Ecclesiae* and judge whether they perform what the law of nature demands of them and support what is naturally good in them.

⁴⁹¹ Following the advice of his spiritual director, due to health reasons Ivan retracted somewhat from his 7th decision, so he later put it into brackets.

⁴⁹² Latin: Who lives according to the rule, lives for God.

⁴⁹³ Latin: Love without anybody knowing about you, and that they think nought of you.

Never complain on account of food.
Never tease, especially not mother.
Love holy silence.
When getting up in the morning, washing, walking toward the church, think of the most holy Eucharist.



*Interior of Ivan's room on Starčević Square in Zagreb in which he lived from 1922 until his death.
Most of the furniture is preserved and is kept in his memorial museum.*

LETTER TO DON MATE BLAŠKOVIĆ 22 April 1928

Eighteen days before death, and several days before going to the hospital, on 22 April 1928, Ivan Merz sent a letter to his friend Don Mate Blašković, a priest in Hvar, in which he writes about French literature. This was actually a response to a letter on the same topic which Don M. Blašković sent him and in which he sought advice and instruction for reading the works of French writers. Ivan Merz answered him extensively giving a critical review from the Catholic viewpoint of individual French writers and their works. It is impossible to intuit from this letter that Ivan was seriously ill and that he is preparing himself for surgery; the letter was written calmly with full dedication to the subject-matter, but by the end one feels the spirit of eternity towards which Merz was already heading and in whose light all earthly values and beauties assume a new light and become relative, i.e. they are only as valuable as they contribute to the real purpose of man's earthly voyage. This letter presents very well the literary views of Ivan Merz and his understanding of literature at the end of his life. Although this is a text belonging to personal correspondence which will be published in the special volume of his Collected Works (in Croatian), we nevertheless chose to publish it here too, at the end of his diary texts, because this is the conclusion of his professional occupation with literature. On the other hand, with its tone, and especially the last paragraph, the letter reveals the inner state of Ivan's soul which was at that time standing face to face with eternity into which he was to enter very soon.⁴⁹⁴

My dear father! You enumerated many names of French writers. I recommend that you acquire the following history of French literature: Parvillez-Moncarey, *French literature* (Beauchesne). This book gives a very good overview of literature and in addition gives the Catholic viewpoint. Without such a handbook, it will be difficult for you to orient yourself objectively, especially if you are in contact with someone who doesn't have Catholic criteria in the judgement of art. I fear that this professor of French in Lausanne lacks not only real notions about literature, but about life itself, when she doesn't refrain from recommending Musset's *The Lovers of Venice*, as if French literature didn't have better things to offer! I think you can read all the well-known French lyricists (Hugo, Lamartine, Vigny, Musset) to gain an insight into the direction which they represented and about their literary qualities. For this purpose, one anthology will satisfy your needs (Edit. Nelson:

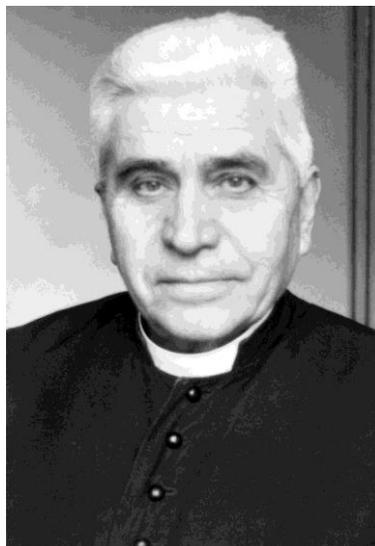
Anthology of French Poetry), and it would be a waste of your time to read the entire Sully Prudhomme or all the *Contemplations*, *Legends of the Centuries*, etc. These works contain excellent parts, but as a whole all major works of Prudhomme and Hugo are missing the mark, because one of them was an atheist, and the other an arrogant and empty philosopher. I see no reason for you to read *Les fausses confidences* and ordinary erotic stuff, no matter how innocent this eroticism might seem. The male and female protagonists of these dramas are, objectively speaking, weaklings in whom love is not that huge, God-given impulse whose aim is the creation of future saints and to be a mark of the relationship of Christ and the Church. Musset especially was a weakling and an immoral man, full of talent, but we are helpless here because as Catholics we can enjoy esthetically

⁴⁹⁴ The original of this letter is not preserved. We copied it from the only source - Dr. D. KNIEWALD "Dr. Ivan Merz – life and work", Zagreb, 1932, pp. 202–204.

only rare works by him. We can enjoy esthetically only when an idea comes to fruition in a light form. And how to bring our reason to be satisfied with these meagre ideas? I would therefore recommend to you to read and study the authors in whom the idea dominates over the exterior, works which have the vast horizon of ideas and their proclamation as its topic, and not the overly restricted world of eroticism (as if there was nothing else in the world apart from eroticism!). Among the lyrics, please read: Verlaine (all his works), Péguy, Claudel, Cardonnel. I warmly recommend Bossuet's sermons (he is a great lyricist) and Dante. Get yourself the *Illustrated Manual of Catholic Literature in France from 1870 to this day*; Calvet: *Renewal in Catholic Literature* (Bloud) and Valléry: *Anthology of Catholic Poetry*. Especially in this last work you will find substantial nourishment: the great Christian poetry in which your soul will find full pleasure, a recollection in the light of the idea. Please, read in *Hrvatska straža* all the articles written by Califron and Mahnić about art and get yourself a book by Maritaine *Art and Scholasticism*. You will like this book, because it will take you to the highest peaks where the eternal, uncreated Beauty reflects itself in the created one. I think that this knowledge of Catholic teaching about Beauty, the beautiful and fine arts should accompany every Christian in judging all kinds of arts. Unfortunately, we are all today educated in such a liberal manner that we become enthusiastic about works whose level of ideas is so shallow. I think that we Catholics often go astray in this matter, not paying enough attention to ideas. Read Ghéon's *The Poor Man under the Staircase* and compare it to *Fausse Confidences*; how much we enjoy Ghéon, where the action lifts us to heaven, into the source of all virtue, when we see that the main protagonist renounces her permitted marriage to remain faithful to her husband who, she believes, is dead. The heroism of the Christian and supernatural sacrifice which between two goods chooses the more perfect one fills us with enthusiasm, a great illumination floods the mind, and will and emotion are enveloped by this virtue and want to assimilate it within them. (!). I am deeply convinced that outside of the Church there is no full beauty and art for a Christian; the natural beauty itself, as presented by Homer and Sophocles, is a real beauty, but it cannot satisfy us, as we live surrounded by the luminance of heavenly virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, we who have dived into the Heart of Eternal Beauty and who take our nourishment from the heavenly Blood of the Lamb. I think that the pinnacles of created beauty are in the Missal and Breviary, in the Pontifical Mass and Gregorian melodies. The notional content here is absolute – these are God's own words, shrouded in the simplest and transparent vesture of rhythmic movements and choral melodies. This transparency is so fine that through it we stand in direct contact with eternal, supernatural ideas which enlighten our mind and effuse our will and emotions with joy. This is a real anticipation of esthetic enjoyments in heaven, *anticipatio visionis beatificae*.

I am convinced that you are filled with enthusiasm for great Catholic art and for liturgy, Gregorian chant, Palestrina, Bossuet, Fra Angelico, Verlaine, Ghéon, Claudel (*Annunciation to Mary*), the cathedral of Chartres, Dante. Nobody can match us, Catholics, in the field of art: Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, all of them are pigmies whose tragedy lies in the fact that they were not Catholics because, if they had been, maybe something would become of them. When, God granting, we get again a Christian century, in the histories of literature their names will not stand out in bold letters as is now the case. Two or three lines about them – that is enough. I forgot to mention Baudelaire. In my opinion, his poetry is healthier than the poetry of the romantics, because he clearly distinguishes good from evil and always, in the midst of sin, is aware of the presence of God who looks upon that sin and condemns. He is sincere and in him we can hear the beating of the heart of Grace which calls him to the right path, and by that very fact, draws others to it: *“Be blessed, my God, who gives us suffering as a divine remedy to our impurities!”*

By all means, get yourself the autobiography of the Great St. Therese (Spanish). She is full of dynamite, just like you. However, I am sorry I wasted so many words on literature, because a more important task is to educate and lead people to Jesus and in fulfilling this task art, just like everything created, should only help us to come to Jesus. Therefore, I know that you will occupy yourself with books and art only in so far as your flock needs it, in order for you to be a good shepherd, and to take this flock and yourself one day to eternal Beauty...



Don Mate Blašković, priest from Hvar. Ivan sent him his last letter immediately before his death.

*Dr. Dragutin Kniewald in his biography of Ivan Merz, commenting on this letter, among others says: "In this letter Ivan unwittingly presents how he resolved many questions which interested him in his younger days, and somewhat tortured him. These are the questions of eternal moment, because just when one generation solved them – in one way or another – there comes another whose life is challenged by these same questions. In this letter, Ivan, as an expert gives his complete view of modern French lyrics and practical advice for its study. (...) But, he was mostly interested in those works which are an artistic expression of real Catholic life, for real Catholic literature and arts, especially for liturgy, which he considered to be the greatest work of art in the world."*⁴⁹⁵



Stained glass representing Ivan Merz made by the sculptor Anto Mamuša in 2004. It is situated in the chapel of the bishop's Chancery in Banja Luka.

⁴⁹⁵ D. KNIEWALD, *Dr. Ivan Merz – life and work*, Zagreb, 1932, p. 204.

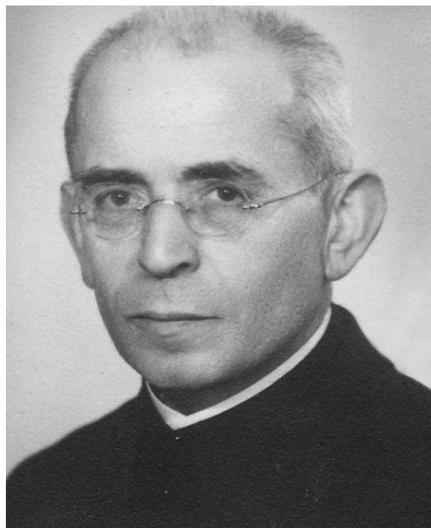
THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE

Ivan Merz's last conversation with his spiritual director,
Fr. Josip Vrbanek

Although not strictly part of the Diary, I believe we ought to publish the material relating to the last days of Ivan Merz's life. We have documents from this period which illustrate the pinnacle of his sanctity, and this is the offering of his life to God for the good of Croatian youth. We already saw from several of his Diary entries from the beginning of 1928 how he takes pain and suffering with an elevated spirit. He confirmed this in his death, too. Therefore, for the purpose of a complete insight into his spirituality, we publish the description of his last days, as told by his spiritual director and confessor, Fr. Josip Vrbanek in his biography of Ivan Merz. This is an abridged version of Vrbanek's text; the interested reader can find many other inspiring and edifying details in Fr. Josip Vrbanek's original biography of Ivan Merz (in Croatian).⁴⁹⁶

There is a flaming red thread weaving its way throughout Merz's life and that is pain. As a matter of fact, it is, along with love, the predominant feeling of his life. Love as a yearning for happiness, for God; pain as the lack of this happiness and at the same time its force. And as he wanted this happiness not only for himself, but for one whole nation, it was necessary to go in front of this nation, on the way of the cross to happiness – to God. (...)

The question of pain is the chief motif and the touchstone of philosophizing. Likewise, it was the main question of life for Merz: "Why do I suffer; therefore, how should I suffer?" He realized quickly how suffering is connected with the essence of the human being. (...)



*A Jesuit, Fr. Josip Vrbanek, Ivan's spiritual director
and confessor in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.*

⁴⁹⁶ Josip VRBANEK, *A Knight of Christ - Dr. Ivan Merz*, Zagreb, VKB and VKS, 1943, pp. 145–155. (in Croatian)

The cause of greatest pain for man is freedom, which causes the greatest lack – moral evil – sin, with all its terrible consequences for property, health and honor, and in the supernatural realm the loss of grace and eternal happiness. But it also has its beautiful side, because it is the most beautiful ornament of a reasonable man who through it becomes a co-creator of God’s greatest wealth in the world: virtue and merit. And, as they are the most precious, they must be paid by the greatest pain – sacrifice. If you are, therefore, a man of reason, an earthly traveler, you must reconcile yourself with being a sufferer.

Ivan understood this quickly. “If we want to achieve something, we must drive ourselves really hard... Life must be a sacrifice, without looking much at its beautiful sides. Life is an immensely difficult struggle, to the point of burning ourselves out... For the sake of this struggle human life has a higher meaning...” (Diary, 19 March 1915). In this spirit, he withstood all renunciations connected with army life, made even more difficult by the war efforts, anxieties and horrors, until finally, having lost 12 kilos, - he returned home ill.

Along with this philosophical understanding of pain, Merz quickly developed a Christian understanding, according to which the Creator is glorified through the battle of grace against sinful nature, and the Savior through a voluntary carrying of his Cross. “Sometimes I feel a certain satisfaction, I might even say happiness for suffering unjustly; in that way, I am getting closer to Christ” (Diary, 6 April 1916). “Yes, pain is the content of life, it rules over all. Where pain is absent, we can be sure that real life is absent, too.” (17 December 1916). In the same vein on the feast of St. Luke – 18 October 1921 he writes from Paris consoling and encouraging his friend Dragan Marošević, and at the same time reveals his proficiency in the matters of pain: “I know it is hard to suffer, but some people have a calling to suffer. We are one body of Christ and he assigns different roles in it. Some must suffer, to mitigate the wrath of God which should descend on our society. Huysmans would call these chosen ones the mystical lightning rods. (...) As there is no accident, I hold that the plan of Providence lies in realizing this secret from his life: to suffer for others.”

Permeated by these thoughts, Ivan almost sought an all-embracing suffering. He sacrificed his artistic talent, deciding not to be a writer; he sacrificed all the pleasures connected with it: playing piano, going to the theatre, even concerts... He ennobled it all in such a way that he relished only the Holy Service, where he was continuously immersed in eternal art. He inflicted pain upon himself by fasting, lying on a hard bunk and other types of penitence; even more by professional work; but most of all with glad acceptance of trials which God allowed: misunderstandings, humiliations, privations, and especially illness and an early death. The spirit with which Ivan permeated this suffering was Jesus’s spirit which values suffering, so that he not only suffered in a dedicated way, but loved suffering as a great component of every success; actually, he loved and sought it, because it made him more in the likeness of Jesus.

Ivan’s desire to suffer was in God’s plan; it was in this plan, through the early and painful sacrifice of life, that he became as much similar to Jesus as is humanly possible. (...)

Along with his discharging of the duties of a teacher, in the early spring of 1928 his health deteriorated again, this time with a suppurating inflammation of the facial cavities. The physicians advised surgery as soon as possible, and he was willing to oblige.

In severe spiritual dryness, he came to the confessor.

The dear God is leaving me as well!

He is not leaving you, his confessor would say. He is only withdrawing the sweetness of his presence. A good Father is sending his dear child into a higher school. The absence of the Father is for the child’s good.

– Still, it would be nice to live and work longer...

True, but even Jesus, by the plan of the Father, had to end his earthly life in the thirty-third year. And in what a way!

- Truly, pain is something great and valuable!
- Yes, in it the man himself creates his gift to the Lord. A willing acceptance of death drains from man his “I”. This tiny “I” disappears in God’s immeasurable greatness. But it is precisely in this embrace that he finds the full happiness of a child.
- Sacrifice, complete sacrifice! I say, the time of sacrifice has come.
- Let us submit this sacrifice with a magnanimous dedication.
- *L’abandon!* Full abandon! To give everything, with a filial love.
- Well – *fiat!* Your will be done!...

Already on earth his personal will was so much in harmony with God’s will that in heaven too, he will continue to work for souls.

– Couldn’t I postpone the surgery for a little bit at least? – he asked for the second time.

- Are you able to work? – asked his confessor.
- I can, a little bit, answered Ivan. – And the physician tells me that without surgery my capacity to work will be less and less!

– Shouldn’t you go to Vienna for a check-up?

I thought of that. But the finances? I wouldn’t like to be a burden to my parents. And the school? Admittedly, I completed the material, there is a little bit left to finish. If I go to Vienna, I couldn’t return in time to complete it.

- But our physicians are good.
- Everybody praises them. They say it is dangerous to postpone the surgery.
- Well, there is no other choice then, but to go.
- In God’s hands! – he said, surrendering his soul already in advance.

The Lord wanted him to die among Croatian youth; he lived for it in the body, and he will continue living as its ideal. Our last conversation was on certain drawbacks among the Eagles and how the only medicine for such superficiality is a substantial sacrifice, according to the words of the Savior: “Unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest” (John 12:24). And with this thought he bade farewell: “Yes, I have been convinced of that for a long time: one ought to sacrifice! I am ready!

He spoke similarly with Dr. Beluhan and Dr. Kniewald. In the end, when he had all the preparations made with the physician regarding surgery, he revealed to his parents that he is going to the hospital. (...)

On 25 April 1928, he ordered in an exemplary manner the library and all his documents, received Holy Communion in the basilica of the Most Holy Heart, and went to the clinical department for throat and nose. The next morning, Professor Dr. Mašek operated on him. Excessive bleeding ensued and, as the physicians themselves admitted, there was a danger of his dying right away. They gave him all their attention and somehow managed to stop the bleeding, but soon after, an inflammation of the brain ensued. (...). In spite of all the efforts of the physicians, there was no help for Ivan and the loss of consciousness and terrible cramps became more and more frequent and lasted longer. He spoke once again with his confessor in full consciousness, and the second time, when receiving the Anointing of the Sick, he could communicate only by movements of his body. The confessor reminded him of their last conversation about sacrifice. (...) Seeing that Ivan was really offering the sacrifice of his life, he reminded him of their conversation about the Eagles and asked whether there is something he wished to say? Ivan confirmed, and the confessor told him: “You are sacrificing your life for the Croatian Eagles?” At that moment, Ivan’s face brightened and there was a glint in his big eyes, as if he wanted to smile with his wounded face and he nodded with his head. With this we parted. (...) The

day before his death Ivan received a telegram from the Holy Father which reads: “The Holy Father blesses the ill Dr. Merz and invokes upon him divine help. – Cardinal Gaspari.”



Former hospital in Zagreb in Franje Račkoga Street 4, in which Ivan Merz died. Inside the circle is the window of his hospital room. Today, this building is an elementary school which from the year 1993 bears the name “Dr. Ivan Merz”. In the room on the first floor the place is marked where Ivan’s hospital bed was, the last station of his earthly life.

TESTAMENT

24 April 1928

On 25 April 1928 Ivan went to hospital, after attending Mass and receiving Communion in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus where he went regularly every day. The hospital – Clinic for ear, nose and throat – was situated in Draškovićeve street.⁴⁹⁷ He was operated on the next day.

Before going to the operation, Ivan, sensing an imminent end of his earthly life, wrote his testament. It was probably on 24 April 1928, a day before going to the hospital. His father found it in an envelope with an inscription “Testamentum” in the drawer of his desk after Ivan’s death. The testament, written on a single sheet of paper, is actually his epitaph. He composed it in Latin, adding three words in Greek. The inscription reads as follows:

TESTAMENTUM

Decessit in Pace fidei Catholicae.

Mihi vivere Christus fuit et mori lucrum.

Expecto misericordiam Domini et inseparabilem
plenissimam aeternam possessionem Smi Cordis Jesu.

⁴⁹⁷ Today this building is an elementary school which, from the year 1993 carries the name of “Dr. Ivan Merz”. In the room on the first floor the place of Ivan’s hospital bed on which he ended his earthly life is marked.

I. M. dulcis in refrigerio et in pace.
Anima mea attinget finem suum quare creata erat.
EN THEŌ KYRIŌ



Here is the English translation:
TESTAMENT

He died in the peace of the Catholic faith.
For me to live was Christ, and to die is gain.
I expect the mercy of the Lord and an undivided,
full eternal possession of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus.
I(van) M(orz) blessed in refreshment and peace.
My soul will reach the goal for which it was created.
In God our Lord



TESTAMENTUM.
Decessit in pace fidei Catholicae
Mihi vivere Christus ^{est} et
mori lucrum.
Expecto misericordiam
Domini et innumerabilem ^{plexissimam} aeternam
possessionem Sui Cordis Jesu.
I. M. Dulcis in refrigerio et in pace.
Anima mea attinget finem
suum quare creata erat.
EN THEŌ KYRIŌ *

Facsimile of Ivan's testament in Latin. This is the last document which he wrote with his own hand before death.

The second sentence of the testament is a quotation from Paul's epistle to the Philippians: "For me to live is Christ..." (Phil 1:21). In quoting this sentence he firstly

placed the Latin verb in the present tense – *est* (is), as is in the original. But later, experiencing the fact that he is already dead, he crossed it and placed *fuit* i.e. “was”. So, the sentence now reads: “For me to live was Christ...” At the end, Ivan added three words in Greek, a language he didn’t know. Although they are not clearly written, we can conclude that he wanted to express this thought: “In God the Lord”. To that he added the ancient Christian sign, two initial letters of Christ’s name in Greek blended into one: XP.

Ivan wrote his testament in Latin, the language of the Church. With this he wanted once again to confirm his faith and belonging to the one, holy, apostolic and Roman Catholic Church. Apart from the abovementioned quotation from the New Testament (Phil 1:21) in the text there are two other sentences which Ivan took over from the inscriptions in the Roman catacombs. These are: “*Decessit in pace fidei catholicae*” and “*Dulcis in refrigerio et in pace.*”⁴⁹⁸ With these quotations Ivan wanted once again to confirm his love and unity with the source of Christianity, with the faith of the early Roman Christians and martyrs. The text of his testament is today an epitaph on the white marble plate above his grave in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.

With these words of his testament Ivan once again professed his deep, strong Catholic faith which was his vocation in life. In these last sentences which he put on paper he once again solemnly professed all three cardinal virtues – faith, hope and love – which were the foundations of his sanctity. Believing in Jesus Christ who was his life, he expected with certain hope his mercy and the possession of the love of his Most Holy Heart whom he sincerely revered here on earth, as he had confirmed once again at the beginning of the last section of his Diary, on 21 January 1928: “All for the glory of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus!”

Ivan passed away and entered eternal life on 10 May 1928 at 10:25 a.m. Around 11:30 the bell of the Zagreb cathedral announced to Zagreb and the whole of Croatia that Ivan parted from this world and entered the beatific world which God promised to those who believe in him and love him. The Lord of life demanded and accepted his sacrifice for his greater glory and for his and our greatest good.

The news that Ivan went into eternal life spread with great speed throughout Zagreb, and then all of Croatia. All Catholic Zagreb gathered on Sunday, 13 May in the Mirogoj Cemetery for the last farewell to the great apostle of Croatian youth. They were joined by numerous delegates from various Catholic organizations throughout Croatia. The estimates say that around 5000 persons were present at the funeral. The funeral was led by the auxiliary bishop Dr. Dominik Premuš. From the number and the reputation of the persons, it was a funeral which Zagreb hadn’t seen since the death of bishop Josip Lang. He was buried firstly in an ordinary grave near the Arcades, and in 1930 his body was transferred into the large family grave on the south-eastern part of the cemetery. Due to the process of his beatification, his body was taken in 1977 into the new tomb in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus where it is kept today.

Ivan’s significance for the Church in Croatia was best expressed by the youth from Vinkovci who brought to his grave a wreath with a banner on which there is the following inscription: “Thank you, Eagle of Christ, for showing us the way to the Sun”. With his saintly life, Ivan really showed and continues to show the way to Jesus Christ, the spiritual sun of our life.

⁴⁹⁸ Jos Janssens, SJ, *Vita e morte del cristiano negli epitaffi di Roma anteriori al sec. VII.*, Roma, Univ. Gregoriana Editrice, 1981.

BLESSED IVAN MERZ APOSTLE AND SPIRITUAL DOCTOR



This large altar painting of the Bl. Ivan Merz was painted by Anto Mamuša for the first anniversary of his beatification, which was celebrated on 10 May 2004. The painting portrays Blessed Ivan as a doctor of Christian life in faithfulness and union with the Catholic Church. This is indicated in his posture which is a posture of speaking and the stand from which he is lecturing. In the background is the silhouette of the Pope, St. John Paul II who proclaimed him Blessed. In the painting are two churches with whom Merz was specially connected: the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb and the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. In the sky in the form of the sun, there shines the symbol of the Eucharist which was the central source of the spiritual life of Blessed Ivan. In the lower left corner is the image of the Servant of God Marica Stanković who was strongly influenced by Bl. Merz and who, on his incentive, established the first lay institute in Croatia – the Female Co-Workers of Christ the King. In the background, we also see a multitude of young and adult Croatian believers, admirers of the Bl. Ivan to whom he became a model and who follow his “way to the Sun”. This altar painting of the Bl. Ivan Merz is placed alongside his tomb in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb.

APPENDIX

The important texts about the Bl. Ivan Merz

After the death of the Bl. Ivan Merz and his entry into eternal life, a number of approbatory articles, brochures, books, various studies, five doctoral dissertations and other publications were published about him.⁴⁹⁹ The peak of the public recognition of his sanctity was certainly his beatification in Banja Luka on 22 June 2003. On that occasion, Pope John Paul II made known the official position of the Catholic Church about the Bl. Ivan Merz, her thinking about this faithful son for whom “life was Christ”.

We, therefore, cannot end his Diary without mentioning at the end the fulfilled goal towards which Ivan was climbing, and that is the public recognition of his sanctity at his beatification. Along with the most important texts from the beatification of the Bl. Ivan, we added several others in chronological order. The first, with which I begin this Appendix was written immediately after Ivan’s death by Mr. Dušan Žanko, a well-known Croatian Catholic intellectual and a close friend and co-worker of Bl. Ivan Merz. In his article, *Homo catholicus*, he summarized all the thoughts and declarations which various authors, friends and contemporaries of Ivan Merz said about him.

After the texts and documents from beatification, we couldn’t leave out what the successor of St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI thought and said about the Bl. Ivan Merz. Actually, he already unofficially canonized him in a way, because he listed him among the eighteen greatest worshipers of the Eucharist among the saints of the Catholic Church.

These chosen texts about the Bl. Ivan Merz with which we conclude this 4th volume of his Collected Works bear witness to how Ivan’s sanctity was accepted in the hearts and souls of those who got to know him during his life, or those who befriended him through his writings and works which he left us as his heritage.

⁴⁹⁹ Bibliography of all the published texts and books about the Bl. Ivan Merz can be accessed on his web site: www.ivanmerz.hr

Dušan Žanko

HOMO CATHOLICUS

Dr. Ivan Merz

Orlovska misao, Zagreb, May 1928–1929, No. 8, pp. 97–98



DUŠAN ŽANKO (1904–1980)⁵⁰⁰ was a close friend of Ivan Merz in the Zagreb period of his life. They were together in the leadership of the Eagle organization. As a pronounced Catholic intellectual and a man of thoroughly Christian views, he understood Ivan well, particularly his spirituality and his apostolic work. After Ivan's death, he wrote about him several high-quality papers, the best of which is an essay, *The Soul of Dr. Ivan Merz* (in Croatian), published on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Ivan's death in the magazine *Život*, No. 5, 1938, pp. 245-273. This essay is generally taken to be the best presentation of the personality and spirituality of Ivan Merz. It was reprinted several times in later publications, and can also be accessed on Ivan Merz's web page.⁵⁰¹ It is too long to be reprinted here again, but we have chosen instead another article entitled *Homo Catholicus* in which Mr. Žanko summarized the most essential facts about Merz. With his literary talent, he perfectly expressed what all the contemporaries who knew Ivan from up close thought about him and how they experienced him. Below, we feature the article *Homo Catholicus* by Dušan Žanko:

You can call him pious, pure, conscientious, apostolic, the embodiment of the Eagle virtues, angelic, holy – but I will always call him a Catholic man. Aren't we all Catholics? No, we aren't! I read a lot about Catholic lay persons, but Dr. Ivan was the first living lay Catholic whom my eyes, weary of a skeptical search for a Catholic man, met. He was a pure and perfect Catholic: Catholic with the Pope and for the Pope, Catholic in whom all the holy books come to life, all the Church fathers, all the councils, all the dogmas, all encyclicals, all ceremonies, all the commandments, all the syllabuses, all the catechisms, all the infallibilities, all the bishops, all the priests, all the tabernacles, all the poor, all the religious the world over. Are there such Catholics among us?

Dr. Ivan was a Catholic chiseled from a single block, consisting all of one idea, all of one color, Catholic from the depths, all the way to the top.

Dr. Ivan lived in the Church, in Christ – in the spiritual Church, in the material Church, in the Christ's Body, in Christ's spirit, in Christ who is both man and God.

The Catholicism of Dr. Ivan Merz is not the modern Catholicism where the social position holds priority compared to the position of one's soul, where everything is

⁵⁰⁰ Biographical data about Dušan Žanko can be found in: Ivan Merz, *The Influence of Liturgy on French Writers* (in Croatian), Zagreb, 2013, p. 272.

⁵⁰¹ This essay by Dušana Žanko was published in the *Proceedings of the Symposium* held in Zagreb in 1978, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Bl. Ivan Merz's death. It was also published in a special booklet *Light on the Mountain* (in Croatian), Zagreb, 1990, which contains all the works which D. Žanko published about Ivan Merz, among which is the essay *The Soul of Dr. Ivan Merz* (in Croatian). The same article can be found on the web page of the Bl. Ivan Merz, among the publications published about him.

channeled into earthly values (politics, economy, careers) under the guise of religious ones. Ivan's Catholicism was not satisfied with nicely packed formalism, with enticing compromise and opportunism, even if it lies within the ranks of the Church, or social or literary circles.

His Catholicism was concentrated in the Host with which he nourished his spirit and his heart daily, in the Pope with whose encyclicals he fed his mind daily; in the Eagle apostolate, in which he daily perfected his will.

He had no enterprise of his own, nor comfort. He was given for others, for God's sake. His work, his studies, his silence, all of that is saturated with the thought of God, yearning for the Eternal. We drank this thought, this yearning daily from his eyes, his words, his movements, because everything was permeated with the Divine; everything was transparent, spiritualized, all without a trace of obtrusiveness.

He lived and walked among us as a miracle, i.e. as a Catholic man. He was an outgrowth of our milieu, but remained pure before his vow of chastity, prayed before his daily Communion, listened to the Church all the way to perfect obedience. We, on the other hand, always find excuses: the rotten environment, the way we were brought up, the spirit of our century, nationalism without any guilt on our part, shaken authorities, the predisposition to think "originally", stubbornly, individually. There, that is why Dr. Ivan was a miracle of today's epoch, and such miracles can only emerge from the one, infallible, religious-ecclesiastical Catholicism.

Why did God send us the likeness of this lay Catholic man, Dr. Merz?

To show us how to live in a Catholic way, to correct and perfect our own Catholicism, to focus the meaning of our apostolate on the Church, to make Heaven the goal of our efforts, Heaven in which he now prays for our Catholicism: *Homo Catholicus*

Dušan Žanko

POPE JOHN PAUL II ON IVAN MERZ

Speeches on the beatification and Apostolic breve

Banja Luka, 22 June 2003



Posters like this throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina announced the arrival of the Pope John Paul II and beatification of Ivan Merz on 22 June 2003.

Pope John Paul II, even before the beatification, often mentioned Ivan Merz in public. It was mainly in welcoming speeches in Croatian language addressed to young Croats who used to come on pilgrimages to Rome in the days around 1 May (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983).⁵⁰² Cardinal Franjo Šeper informed the future pope, Wojtyła, about Ivan Merz already during the 2nd Vatican Council. The Pope often mentioned this in private conversations. The peak of Pope John Paul II's advocacy of Ivan Merz and acknowledgement of his sanctity was Ivan's beatification which occurred in Banja Luka on 22 June 2003. On that occasion the Pope made several speeches, of which we chose to publish the two most important ones. In addition, we publish the official document of beatification – the *Apostolic breve*.

The brief introductory speech at the Beatification Mass which Pope John Paul II gave at the beginning of the ceremony of beatification is particularly important and interesting. For the sake of comparison, the Holy Father made such an introduction only at the beatification of Ivan Merz, while in the beatification masses for A. Stepinac and M. Petković there was no such introduction. In this introduction, he, among others, mentioned five qualities of the Bl. Ivan: witness, protector, fellow-traveler, example and model.

After the act of beatification proper, the Pope's homily followed. This is an official speech in which he described the most important elements of the sanctity of the Bl. Ivan Merz.

⁵⁰² *Pope John Paul II speaks to the Croats (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, FTI, 2011, p. 60, 65, 69, 76

However, the most important document of all is the *Apostolic breve*, an official papal document published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* about the beatification that took place. We publish this document as a crown of the official acknowledgement of the sanctity of Ivan Merz on the part of the Catholic Church, through the words of her Supreme Pontiff.



Solemn Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at the beatification of Ivan Merz in Banja Luka on Petrićevac on 22 June 2003. Around 70,000 faithful participated.

Pope's introduction at the beatification mass for Ivan Merz

Petrićevac, Banja Luka, 22 June 2003

“Dear brothers and sisters, Christ Jesus, the light which enlightens every man who comes into this world, wishes that his disciples be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Sons and daughters of this land, as a witness of the suffering and glory of the Lord, I wish to celebrate this Eucharist: the sacrifice of praise and an offering of reconciliation and peace. The light of Christ shines in one of the sons of the Banja Luka Episcopate: in Ivan Merz who will, during this ceremony, be declared blessed. He was a believer in a lay profession, brave and a model to follow, a man of culture and sensitive to the divine service, immersed in the supernatural, actively engaged in the spreading of the Kingdom of God. It is him whom I wish to give to you as a witness of Christ and protector, and at the same time a fellow-traveler on the path through your history, in the rebuilding of what was destroyed by violence, in the reconciliation between individuals and families, in the promotion of true social renewal in justice and peace. From this day on, he will be a model for the youth to follow, an example for lay believers. Let us focus our eyes on Christ Jesus and on this weekly feast of the Resurrection, i.e. Sunday, humbly pray that he may be present among us and reward us with his immeasurable mercy.”⁵⁰³

⁵⁰³ *Papal Missal of the Beatification of the Bl. Ivan Merz*, pp. 14-15.

The speech of the Pope John Paul II at the beatification mass for Ivan Merz

Petrićevac, Banja Luka, 22 June 2003

1. "You are the light of the world." This claim, dear brothers and sisters, Jesus repeats today to us too, on this Eucharistic gathering. And this is not a mere sermon, but a *statement*, which expresses the *indestructible demand* which proceeds from the received baptism.

Namely, the human being is by the force of this sacrament grafted into the Mystical Body of Christ (cf. Rom 6:3-5). The apostle Paul says: "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). Justifiably, therefore, pronounces St. Augustine: "Let us rejoice and give thanks: we became not only Christians, but Christ... Admire and exult: we became Christ" (*In Ioann. Evang. tract.*, 21, 8: CCL 36, 216).

But Christ is the "true light which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9). A Christian is therefore called to become on his or her part a *reflection of this Light*, imitating Jesus and taking Him as a model. In order to accomplish that, he will listen to His word and meditate upon it, participate consciously and actively in the ceremonial and sacramental life of the Church, execute the commandment of love and serve the brothers, especially the small, the poor and those who suffer.

2. *Here followed the Pope's greetings to the religious, Catholic and Orthodox dignitaries and representatives of state and civil local authorities, then the greetings to the faithful of the Islamic and Jewish religions. After that the Pope continued with these words:*

And to you, *my beloved sons and daughters of this pilgrim Church* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I come with open arms to embrace you and tell you that you occupy a special place in the Pope's heart. The Pope incessantly presents in prayer to the Lord the suffering which still burdens your striding ahead and together with you he hopes and waits for better days.

From this town, which is marked by so much suffering and so much blood throughout history, I pray to the Almighty Lord to be merciful for all the acts of guilt committed against man, his dignity and his freedom, including those committed by the sons of the Catholic Church. Let Him inspire in all the wish for mutual forgiveness. Only in the atmosphere of true reconciliation, will the memory of so many innocent victims and their sufferings not go in vain and will motivate us to build new relationships of brotherhood and understanding.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, *the righteous man*, fully immersed in divine light, becomes like *a torch which shines and warms us*. This is the message offered to us today by the character of the new blessed, Ivan Merz.

Ivan Merz was an accomplished young man, who knew how to increase the rich natural gifts which he possessed and achieved *many human successes*. We can speak about his life as a *successful life*. But, this is not the reason why his name today is listed among the ranks of the blessed. The reason why he is today added to the assembly of the blessed is his *success before God*. Namely, the great yearning of his life was "never to forget God and always strive to be united with Him" (Diary, 5 February 1918). In everything he did he searched "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus", and allowed Him to "take hold of him" (cf. Phil 3:8, 3:12)

4. Following the school of liturgy, which is the fountain and pinnacle of the life of the Church, Ivan Merz was formed to the *fullness of Christian maturity* and became one of the promoters of the liturgical renewal in his homeland.

Participating in the mass, and feeding himself with the body of Christ and the word of God, he found a motivation to be the apostle of youth. It is not by chance that he chose for himself a motto: “Sacrifice – Eucharist – Apostolate”.

Aware of the vocation which he received at baptism, he made his life into a *run towards sanctity*, this “great measure” of Christian life (Cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, 31). For this reason, as the first reading tells us, “his name will never be blotted out, unfading will be his memory, through all generations his name will live” (Sir 39:9).

5. For a *whole generation of young Catholics* the name of Ivan Merz meant a program of life and work. And it must be the same today! Your homeland and your Church, dear young people, have experienced difficult moments and now you ought to work in order to *put life into motion again in all the fields of life*. For this reason, I am addressing you all and ask you not to retreat, *not to give in to the temptation of weakness*, but to increase your efforts so that Bosnia and Herzegovina might become again a country of reconciliation, encounter and peace.

The future of these lands depends on you, too. Do not seek a comfortable life elsewhere, do not flee from your responsibility waiting for someone else to solve your difficulties, but confront evil valiantly with the power of the good.

I advise you all to seek, like the blessed Ivan did, a *personal encounter with Christ* who illuminates life with a new light. Let the Gospel be that great point of reference which will govern your strivings and your commitments! In such a way, you will become the missionaries with words and deeds and will be a sign of God’s love, trustworthy witnesses of Christ’s merciful presence. Do not forget: “Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket” (Matthew 5:15).

6. Brothers and sisters, you who participate in this feast with such dedication, let the peace of God the Father, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and spirit in the knowledge and love of God and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!

This is a prayer and a desire which the Pope today – with the intercession of the blessed Ivan Merz – elevates for you and all the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”



The moment of declaring Ivan Merz Blessed, Banja Luka, 22 June 2003

A joint prayer which the Pope prayed after the beatification

God, our Father, the blessed Ivan, loyal to his baptismal call to sanctity, worked diligently for the education of youth in faith and Christian life. Grant to us too that we, strengthened by his intercession and motivated by his example, faithfully and courageously proclaim the Gospel and bear witness to it. In our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Apostolic breve – the official pontifical document on the

proclamation of the beatification of Ivan Merz

Apostolic breve is an official pontifical document with which the Pope John Paul II acknowledges and confirms that he conducted the beatification of the Bl. Ivan Merz in Banja Luka. Apostolic breve is also the last administrative act with which the longstanding process of beatification of the first lay person of the Church in Croatia, Ivan Merz, is concluded. It is written in Latin, but it was read by the Holy Father in Banja Luka in Croatian. It bears the date of beatification, 22 June 2003, and it was signed, on Pope's order, by the State Secretary of the Vatican, Cardinal Angelo Sodano. At the end of the document is the papal seal with the symbol of a boat and image of St. Peter, and in the semi-circle is the Pope's name in Latin: Ioannes Paulus PP. II. Apostolic breve is published in the official gazette of the Holy See: Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Commentarium Officiale, N. 2, 4. februarii 2005. The document contains a brief overview of the life of the new Blessed and summarizes the basic features of his sanctity and his rich spiritual life which he himself expressed succinctly: "Catholic faith is my vocation in life". Below, we publish the translation of this document.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II
ad perpetuam rei memoriam

POPE JOHN PAUL II
In permanent memory

"Catholic faith is my vocation in life". This sentence, which the young layperson Ivan Merz wrote to his mother during his studies in Paris in 1921, summarizes his whole short, but spiritually rich life, especially marked by love of the holy liturgy and above all towards the Most Holy Eucharist from which he drew the energy for the service that he rendered to the Church in educating youth.

He was born in Banja Luka on 16 December 1896, where he graduated from high school in 1914. He was brought up in a liberal environment. An important influence on his Christian life was exerted by his high school teacher Dr. Ljubomir Maraković, a pronounced Catholic layman. Due to World War I, he interrupted his studies and was sent as a soldier to the battlefield where he experienced all the horrors and misery of war, but this experience focused him even more towards God. His decision was: "Never to forget God. Always strive for union with him... It would be terrible if this war had no benefit for me. I must begin a new, regenerated life in the spirit of a new Catholic awareness." (From the Diary, 5 February 1918).



After the war, he continued studies firstly in Vienna, and then in Paris. In 1922, he returned to Zagreb where he taught the French and German languages. All the way to his death he was a teacher at the Archiepiscopal High School in Zagreb. In 1923, at the University in Zagreb, he attained a doctorate in philosophy with a dissertation on the influence of liturgy on French writers. While he worked as a teacher, he privately studied Christian philosophy under the leadership of Fr. Alfrević. His life, apparently ordinary and simple, was entirely dedicated to the upbringing of Croatian youth. His spiritual ascent was unusual: without a family, without a novitiate, without a seminary, without a permanent spiritual director, guided by the Holy Spirit, he found his way to sanctity. His spiritual development is seen from his diary: he was not a “born saint”, but a young man who fought for faith and moral good and accomplished victory. He loved the Church, the Most Holy Eucharist, the Pope and this love he tried to instill with all his powers into the hearts of Croatian youth. His spiritual life was grounded in the holy liturgy, i.e. on a daily participation at the holy mass, adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament and other forms of devoutness. Already as a 19-year old he made a vow of chastity until marriage. In his 27th year of life, when it was fully clear to him that the Lord wanted his whole heart, he made the vow of eternal chastity. He strengthened the virtue of chastity by his filial devotion to the Virgin Mary. This Venerable Servant of God was primarily known as the apostle of youth, firstly in the Croatian Catholic Youth Association, and then in the Croatian Eagle Association to which he dedicated his soul and with which he commenced in Croatia the Catholic Action as Pope Pius XI wanted. His vision was that the organization would educate chosen young men who would be the apostles of sanctity. To this he added work on liturgical renewal which he promoted in Croatia, thus anticipating the ideas of the Second Vatican Council. He was not without difficulties in his apostolate, but he carried them with an admirable peace of mind, thanks to a close union with God in prayer. He dedicated his mental and bodily sufferings to the Lord for the spreading of God’s Kingdom and for the salvation of souls. He died in Zagreb on 10 May 1928 with a reputation of sanctity. His grave in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus in Zagreb, which he frequented in the last years of his life, is being visited by many faithful praying to the Servant of God. The process of beatification and canonization began in Zagreb in 1958. After having completed everything according legal regulations, on 5 July 2002 the Decree on Heroic Virtues was proclaimed. On 20 December, the same year a Decree of Miracle was proclaimed, referring to a miracle which happened at the grave of the Servant of God. We therefore decided to solemnly carry out the rite of beatification on 22 June 2003

during our pontifical visit to Bosnia. And so today in Banja Luka, during the solemn mass we pronounced this formula:

“We, in granting the desire of our brother the Archbishop of Zagreb Josip Bozanić and numerous other brothers in episcopacy and numerous faithful, having deliberated upon the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with our apostolic authority allow that the Servant of God Ivan Merz from now on be called Blessed and that every year on the day of his birth for heaven, the tenth of May, his memory may be commemorated at locations and in a way foreseen by canonical regulations. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

We wish this to remain in force now and in the future, irrespective of anything that might be opposed to it.

Datum Banialucae, sub anulo Piscatoris, die XXII mensis Junii, anno MMIII, Pontificatus Nostri quinto et vicesimo.

Given in Banja Luka, under the ring of the Fisherman, on the 22nd day of the month of June 2003, and twenty-fifth year of our pontificate.

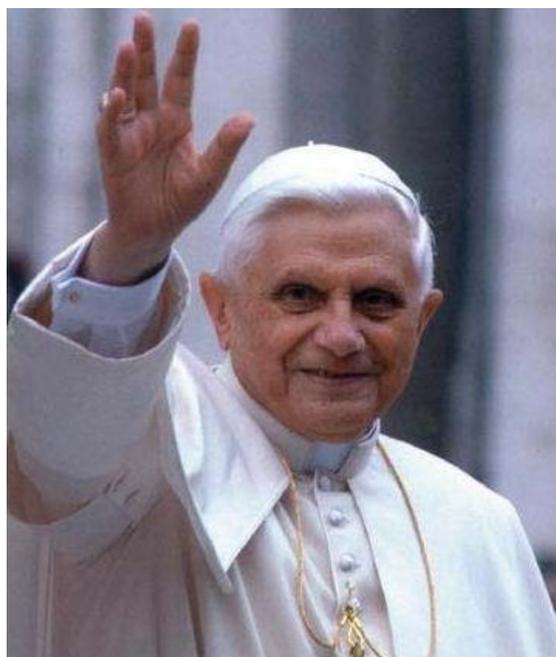
Pope John Paul II

On the order of the Supreme Pontiff

Angelus Card. Sodano, Secretary of State



POPE BENEDICT XVI AND THE BL. IVAN MERZ



Pope Benedict XVI

The successor of the Pope John Paul II in the chair of the Bishop of Rome, Benedict XVI, had a particular relationship with the Bl. Ivan Merz and the opportunity to acquaint himself intimately with his life which greatly impressed him.

While still a Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he was a member of the commission of cardinals in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints which has the task to approve the finalization of the process of beatification of the altar candidates. In this capacity, it was his duty to read the Position⁵⁰⁴ of Ivan Merz and thus acquaint himself intimately with him. In this way, he gained a personal conviction about Merz's spiritual greatness and sanctity which he later mentioned and confirmed on several occasions.

Bl. Ivan Merz in the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* of the Pope Benedict XVI.

Two years after Cardinal Ratzinger became pope in 2007, he published an Apostolic Exhortation about the Eucharist *Sacramentum caritatis*. In No. 94 of this official document he included the Bl. Ivan Merz among 18 great saints of the Catholic Church who especially excelled in the veneration of the Eucharist. It thus happened that Ivan Merz, although not yet proclaimed saint, gained the honor to be numbered among the extraordinary company of saints such as St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas,

⁵⁰⁴ Position is the official document with which, on the basis of the acts of the process and various testimonies it is being proven that a candidate for the altar possessed and lived by Christian virtues in a heroic degree. This is a type of an expanded biography with numerous documents about the life and activity of the future blessed and saint. Merz's Position was written in the Italian language Msgr. Fabijan Veraja with the assistance of the Postulation of Ivan Merz, and it contains 1118 pages.

St. Francis, etc. Below, we publish a part of the text from the conclusion of the Apostolic Exhortation No. 94 in which the Bl. Ivan Merz is mentioned.

“Eucharist stands at the source of every form of sanctity and each one of us is invited to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. How many saints made their own life authentic, thanks to their devoutness to the Eucharist! From St. Ignatius of Antioch to St. Augustine, from St. Anthony the Abbot to St. Benedict, from St. Francis of Assisi to St. Thomas Aquinas, from St. Clare of Assisi to St. Catherine of Siena, from St. Paschal Baylon to St. Peter Julian Eymard, from St. Alphonse M. Liguori to the Bl. Carl Foucauld, from St. John M. Vianney to St. Therese from Lisieux, from St. Pio from Pietrelcina to the Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, from Bl. Pergiorgio Frassati to the **Bl. Ivan Merz**, just to mention some among the many names, sanctity always found its focus in the sacrament of the Eucharist.”



The mention of the Bl. Ivan Merz in this papal document is a new and great recognition of his sanctity after beatification, and also a tribute to the Church in Croatia for having such a personality who can be presented with justification in front of the entire world as a spiritual giant.

Pope Benedict XVI prays to the Bl. Ivan Merz

The bishop of Banja Luka Franjo Komarica met with the Holy Father Benedict XVI on 5 March 2008 at the end of the general audience in the hall of Pope Paul VI. On that occasion, it was the Pope who mentioned the Blessed Ivan Merz and added how he prays to him every day. This is a statement given by Bishop Komarica:

“Having been in Rome from 1 until 8 March 2008, I was also present at the general audience with the Holy Father Benedict XVI on Wednesday, 5 March. After the end of the official part of the audience, the visiting bishops went to individually greet the Pope. When my turn came, Pope flashed a smile and, stretching his arms towards me, said in German: ‘O Bishop Komarica, **you have a great Blessed** among you, really great!’ – thinking, of course, of the Bl. Ivan Merz. I responded: ‘Yes, Holy Father, thank God that it is so, I am glad that you know it and that you say so. We hope and pray that he may be declared saint as soon as possible.’ To this the Pope responded: ‘I hope too, and **I pray to him every day!**’”



Pope Benedict XVI and the Bishop of Banja Luka Franjo Komarica in the Vatican on 5 March 2008.

Pope Benedict XVI about the Bl. Ivan Merz at a meeting with youth in Zagreb on 4 June 2011

On the occasion of his pastoral visit to Croatia on 4 and 5 June 2011, Pope Benedict XVI in his speech in the central Zagreb square, during his meeting with the youth, spoke at some length about the Bl. Ivan Merz. We publish this segment of his speech:

“In this time of your youth you are supported by the testimonies of numerous disciples of the Lord who lived in their own time carrying in their heart the freshness of the Gospel. Remember Francis and Clare of Assisi, Rose from Viterbo, Therese of the Child Jesus, Dominic Savio. How many young saints in the great lap of the Church! But here, in Croatia, let you and I direct our thoughts to the Blessed Ivan Merz. A brilliant young man, fully involved in social life who, after the death of Greta, his first love, took the path of university studies. During the years of World War I, he found himself confronted with destruction and death, which however edified and shaped him, giving him strength to overcome the moments of crisis and spiritual struggle. Ivan’s faith became so strong that he dedicated himself to the study of liturgy and began a powerful apostolate among the youth. He discovered the beauty of the Catholic faith and realized that his vocation in life was to live and embody the friendship with Christ. How many wonderful deeds of love and goodness filled his path. He died on 10 May 1928 at the age of only 32, after several months of illness, dedicating his life for the Church and youth. This young life, given with love, carries the fragrance of Christ and is a call to all of us not to fear to dedicate ourselves to the Lord.”



Pope Benedict XVI greets young Croats on the Central Square in Zagreb on 4 June 2011.



Croatian youth on the Central Square in Zagreb on 4 June 2011 gathered to meet the Holy Father Benedict XVI.

EPILOGUE

by the postulator, Fr. Božidar Nagy, SJ

When the Religious Program of Croatian Television was filming a documentary about Ivan Merz, just before his beatification, the then Archbishop of Zagreb, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić, was asked to give his comment about the future blessed. After the filming of his contribution, where I myself was present, Cardinal Kuharić, escorting the TV crew toward the door, remembered something, stopped us and said: “You know, a far greater proof that God exists are saints on earth than the stars in the sky!” The motive for these words was, of course, Ivan Merz, because this was the reason of our visit and these words from the late cardinal related to him.

Similar to Cardinal Kuharić, Ivan’s first biographer Dr. Dragutin Kniewald whom I often visited in the last years of his life told me on one occasion: “Ivan Merz is an enigma for the unbelievers, but for us Christians he is a revelation!” Dr. Kniewald, as Ivan’s close friend and co-worker, with his first biography of Ivan Merz, published in 1932, four years after Ivan’s death, was the first to inform the Croatian public with this “revelation” of God which was manifested through the soul and life of the blessed, and hopefully soon saint, Ivan Merz.

The life of any saint is incomprehensible unless we take into account that invisible, supernatural force which we call the grace of God, which changes the inner life of a person making him or her a new creature according to God’s plan. This was fully realized in the life of the Bl. Ivan Merz, as we could convince ourselves reading this Diary of his, this precious testimony of the acts of grace in his soul.

When we observe the unfolding of his life, we see that all the circumstances and situations in which Ivan Merz grew up and lived until his return to Zagreb were such that, by sociological laws they could have produced anything but a saint! He was brought up in a liberal family, without special religious education. His teacher, Dr. Lj. Maraković, remembering the young pupil Ivan, wrote about him: “In Merz, until the very end of high school, the feeling for religion and religious life was not awakened at all. It is an oddity that Merz was the only pupil during my entire work in Banja Luka whom in the 5th grade (he was then 14) I had to admonish during inspection in church, because after Transubstantiation he was holding his hands behind his back.”⁵⁰⁵ After high school, Merz spent three months at the Military Academy where he was confronted on a daily basis with immorality of the military milieu in which he was forced to live, as we can see from his Diary. Thereafter, he studied in Vienna and Paris, moving around independently without any supervision, where he could have lived as he wanted and do whatever he liked to do. He participated in the war, passing through all its horrors which could have ruined the honorable traits which he inherited from his home, as was the case with many of his contemporaries. As is seen from his Diary, Ivan had the occasion to get to know life in all



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⁵⁰⁵ Ljubomir MARAKOVIĆ, "A Note" (in Croatian), *Hrvatska prosvjeta*, Zagreb, 25/1938, No. 7/8, pp. 337–339.

its aspects, not only reading numerous literary works, but even more through personal experience meeting many people of different world-views, upbringing and character and living in different situations. Through all that, thanks to God's special Providence which kept vigil over him, Ivan passed unscathed, as a matter of fact strengthened in his deep Christian conviction which he acquired in the most unlikely of places: in war, on the battlefield, looking daily death in the eye.

When he returned from completed studies in Paris, one would expect him to come back "aware" of his value because he studied at the Paris Universities, convinced of his superiority, etc. However, from Paris there came a young graduate with a diploma, but also with his "ascetic regulations" according to which he lived fully permeated with God and moreover with a program of re-Christening the Croatian nation!⁵⁰⁶

In concluding we can only repeat the words of Cardinal Kuharić: "Ivan Merz is a wonder of God's grace. His soul was seized by a special intervention from God, an extraordinary light and motivation was given to him, and he understood what it means to live the kingdom of God, bear testimony to it and reveal it to others."⁵⁰⁷

Once again, we wish to put the reader on notice that the Diary of Ivan Merz, which reveals his soul like in a movie, is not his autobiography nor biography. True, it is the most important document which enables us to familiarize ourselves with the world of thoughts and ideas which were the building blocks of his subsequent great apostolic work which he undertook in the last six years of his life in Zagreb and throughout Croatia. However, in order to get a rounded view of the life and work of Ivan Merz, one ought to consult his biographies, as well as his Collected Works.

Thanking God for this great gift which he gave us in this young witness and apostle of the faith of our day and age, we conclude with the words of St. John Paul II spoken at the beatification of Ivan Merz in Banja Luka on 22 June 2003: "The light of Christ shines in Ivan Merz... I want to give him to you as a witness for Christ and your protector, but at the same time as your companion in the path through your history. From this day on, he will be a model for the youth, an ideal of the lay faithful."

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⁵⁰⁶ See Ivan's letter to Dr. Maraković from Paris of 12 Sept 1921.

⁵⁰⁷ The speech of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić on the celebration of the Days of Ivan Merz in the Basilica of the Heart of Jesus on 10 May 1982. Published in: Card. Franjo Kuharić, *Ivan Merz – the Wonder of God's Grace (in Croatian)*, Zagreb, 2002, p. 34.

