

CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNISM IN PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM since Pius IX till Paul VI

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Abstract: The present article, based on several magisterial documents, illustrates the approach of Roman Pontiffs, beginning with Pius IX and ending with Paul VI, with regard to what used to be called „red plague”, i.e. communism. The article analyses one by one various encyclical letters, apostolic letters, speeches and radio messages in which Roman Pontiffs condemned socialist theories, either explicitly or implicitly.

Keywords: Magisterium, Pope, communism, socialism, marxism, Christianity, encyclical letter, apostolic letter, collectivism, atheism, materialism.

Introduction

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (*Rev* 12,3-4.13.17).

These words, written over 2.000 years ago, didn't lose their value along time, since then and till now, reflecting the destiny of Christian Church and Christians – „those who guard the God words and have the Jesus testimony” – in the world, where appear so many „dragons” that have the aim to persecute Jesus Christ followers.

Many people, during the centuries of Church existence, raised against religion, the keeper of it remains to be the Church, built by Christ on the unshakable foundation of apostle Peter and which the hell gates will not be able to conquer (cf. *Mt* 16,18). Either as Roman kings were the first „martyred” of Christians, or other „fakes” that culminated, in XX century with communism and it's against religion, Christianity and church theories.

Result: the antivirus has sometimes an opposite effect then the expected one – instead of weakening and killing the virus, it strengthens and fortifies it. Maybe the comparison is not the most successful, but it reflects very

well the situation of Christian Church after its outing from catacombs: a more vivid, stronger, and more united Church. Communism, through its antireligious politics made the Church to consolidate more. Tertullian was telling the truth – and the recent reality confirms it – that *sanguis martyrum, semen christianorum* – „martyrs blood, Christians seed”¹. As testimony for this fact are the Churches from countries that a quarter of century ago came out from communist darkness to freedom light.

1. What is communism?

It is difficult to define in some words a very complex phenomenon as it was communism. However, we will try to give it a real, but laconic definition. In *Dizionario teologico enciclopedico*, communism is indicated as a project of egalitarian community that had different theoretical formulations and multiple tentatives of concrete realization in different social experiences. The first theoretical models of communism can be found at Platoon in IV-III b.Ch. centuries. A communist society may be considered the primary Church as well, but it is not the same communism as we understand nowadays through Marx theories. The article’s author calls it communism „from high”, that means a communism that has on its basis not the material communion, but the faith one: „And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (*Fact* 4,32). It was a free, willingly accepted „communism” and these characteristics differ it from communism called „classic”, the Marxist one: a forced communism and oriented to materialistic and atheist ideology that had theoretical support in Marx and Engels’ doctrines and represent the final point of a long historical process that considers as ineluctable the capitalism failure, class strike² and common property on production means³.

¹ TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, 50,13: PL 1, p. 534.

² We mention that manuals of history appeared during communist period, especially in USSR, had a powerful stress on this aspect of universal history, that was divided in periods depending on economic systems typical to a certain period: I – Primitive Community; II – slave ordering that corresponds to Antiquity, III – feudal ordering, typical to Middle Age; IV – capitalist ordering, corresponding to Modern Era; V – socialist ordering, that started after Russian Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and corresponds to Contemporary Age. We have to remember the stress made in the same manuals on great rebellions and revolutions that took place during the history, especially in Europe: rebellion of Spartacus in Roman Empire (74-71 b. Ch.); rebellion Jacqueria (1358) in France and that one of Wat Tyler (1381) in England; Bourgeois Revolution in England (1640-1648); Great French Revolution (1789-1794), that culminated with Great Socialist October Revolution (1917), that lead to the overthrow of the tsarist monarchy and instauration of Soviet power in Russia.

³ Cf. Giuseppe MATTAL, „Comunismo”, in *Dizionario teologico enciclopedico*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1993, 188.

2. Why did Church condemn communism?

In treating this point we will use the article of Massimo Introvigne, founder of the Centre of New Religions Studies (CESNUR), published on the website www.zenit.org, in May 16, 2009.

The article was published at the 20th anniversary of Berlin Wall fall; the author, quoting the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of Pope Pius XI, published in 1937, that rules against communism, mentions that communist ideology was condemned before the appearance of *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, namely by encyclical *Qui pluribus* of Pope Pius IX, that we will refer below.

The article's author indicates six reasons for which communism was condemned by Church magisterium, six reasons that author extracted from the same magisterium:

1. communism is an intrinsically perverse system by its antireligious nature and against human being;
2. communism is a monolith: historical materialism can't be separated from dialectical materialism;
3. historical materialism, hypothetically separated from dialectical materialism, is intrinsically perverse and represents a recipe not for justice, but for oppression and shame;
4. communism is not born from a noble confrontation against injustice, but from a moral and ideological vice;
5. communism is a stage of an extensive revolutionary itinerary;
6. reported at previous phases of revolutionary process, communism represents a more advanced phase, so, from the point of view of catholic doctrine, worse by its amplitude and violence⁴.

Further, we will refer to some pontifical documents for showing that, since its appearance, communism „enjoyed” an almost permanent condemnation on behalf of Church through its supreme pastors' voice.

During the presentation we will use terms as „socialism”, „communism”, „Marxism” that, as they are used in pontifical documents, must be considered as synonyms, as if, sometimes, they are put together in the same document.

3. Condemnation of communism in pontifical magisterium

Considering the danger that the communist theories represented not only for the religious man, but generally for the human being as well, Roman pontiffs declared themselves against this class ideology. The first interventions we see immediately after the publication of *Communist Manifesto* by

⁴ Cf. <http://www.zenit.org/it/articles/perche-la-chiesa-ha-condannato-il-comunismo> [accessed at 27.02.2014].

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in February 1848. Further we will analyze the condemnation of socialist and communist theories in the magisterium of Pius IX (1846-1878), Leon XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), Benedict XV (1914-1922), Pius XI (1922-1939), Pius XII (1939-1958), John XXIII (1958-1963) and Paul VI (1963-1978).

3.1. Pope Pius IX

Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti was elected as pope in June 16, 1846, two years before the publication of Marx's *Manifesto*. In 1864 it was published, as annex to the encyclical *Quanta cura*, the controversial *Syllabus of main errors of present time*, where a series of modernity errors were condemned. Among them, the pope included socialism and communism. The document reminds that these

diseases were many times disapproved by important sentences in: encyclical *Qui pluribus* from November 9, 1846; speech *Quibus quantisque* from April 20, 1849; encyclical *Nostis et nobiscum* from December 8, 1849; speech *Singulari quadam* from December 9, 1854; encyclical *Quanto conficiamur mœrore* from August 10, 1863⁵.

We will analyze shortly these documents where Pius IX declares himself against communism.

3.1.1. Encyclical *Qui pluribus*

Issued in short time after the enthronement of St. Peter, encyclical *Qui pluribus* traces the programme of the new papacy, insisting mostly on the communion with Peter's chair. Besides this, it represents an opportunity for Pius IX to condemn some of the „errors” of his time, as they were perceived at that time. Firstly, it attacks indifferentism, according to which no matter what religion you have, you can get redemption. It condemns freedom of pattern, conscience and thinking and stimulates the principles to defend catholic religion, base of any social and political order. Referring to communism, Pius IX writes:

⁵ *Recueil des allocutions consistoriales, encycliques et autres lettres apostoliques des Souverains Pontifes Clément XII, Benoît XIV, Pie VI, Pie VII, Léon XII, Grégoire XVI, Pie IX, citées dans l'encyclique et le Syllabus du 8 décembre 1864 suivi du Concordat de 1801 et de divers autres documents*, Librairie Adrien le Clerc et C^e, Paris 1865, 20 (21). In this collection of consistorial, encyclical speeches and other apostolic letters quoted in *Quanta cura* and *Syllabus*, there were included texts in Latin and their translation in French. References that will be made to pages with Latin text, in brackets being indicated pages with French text, after which I quoted.

The unspeakable doctrine of Communism, as it is called, a doctrine most opposed to the very natural law. For if this doctrine were accepted, the complete destruction of everyone's laws, government, property, and even of human society itself would follow. To this end also tend the most dark designs of men in the clothing of sheep, while inwardly ravening wolves. They humbly recommend themselves by means of a feigned and deceitful appearance of a purer piety, a stricter virtue and discipline; after taking their captives gently, they mildly bind them, and then kill them in secret. They make men fly in terror from all practice of religion, and they cut down and dismember the sheep of the Lord⁶.

Even then, before the publication of *Communist Party Manifesto*, Pius IX seized the danger that communism may have not only for Christians, but also for each human being, threatened being, as the pontiff mentions, „everyone's laws, government, property, and even of human society itself”.

3.1.2. Speech *Quibus quantisque*

It is a speech voiced by Pius IX, being exiled in Gaeta, in April 20, 1849, after the suppression of the Revolution of 1848 from Pontifical Countries and is generally against revolutionists and Masonry. However, the pope always says he is against communism, called „horrible and very fatal system... contrary to natural right and reason”, system that someone wanted to introduce in Italy, and the result, in the pope's opinion, would have been „a very serious damage and a destruction of the entire human society, and not anyway, but by eliminating any principle of justice, virtue, honesty, religion”⁷.

3.1.3. Encyclical *Nostis et nobiscum*

The encyclical *Nostis et nobiscum*, sometimes met also as called *Noscitis et nobiscum*, was issued by Pope Pius IX in December 8, 1849, after the publication of *Communist Party Manifesto* and it is oriented explicitly towards socialism and communism. The pope doesn't hesitate to use against these two ideologies rough terms as infamous, perverse, stupid, etc. The pontiff writes:

You are aware indeed, that the goal of this most iniquitous plot is to drive people to overthrow the entire order of human affairs and to draw them over to the wicked theories of this *Socialism* and *Communism*, by confusing them with perverted teachings⁸.

And, below, he indicates the aim of these two systems:

⁶ *Recueil...*, 182 (183).

⁷ Cf. *Recueil...*, 216 (217).

⁸ *Recueil...*, 242 (243).

As regards this teaching and these theories, it is now generally known that the special goal of their proponents is to introduce to the people the pernicious fictions of *Socialism* and *Communism* by misapplying the terms „liberty” and „equality.” The final goal shared by these teachings, whether of *Communism* or *Socialism*, even if approached differently, is to excite by continuous disturbances workers and others, especially those of the lower class, whom they have deceived by their lies and deluded by the promise of a happier condition. They are preparing them for plundering, stealing, and usurping first the Church’s and then everyone’s property. After this they will profane all law, human and divine, to destroy divine worship and to subvert the entire ordering of civil societies⁹.

The spiritual and temporal consequences of accepting and spreading those two systems that the encyclical is against are indicated by the same pontiff in the following terms:

But if the faithful scorn both the fatherly warnings of their pastors and the commandments of the Christian Law recalled here, and if they let themselves be deceived by the present-day promoters of plots, deciding to work with them in their perverted theories of *Socialism* and *Communism*, let them know and earnestly consider what they are laying up for themselves. The Divine Judge will seek vengeance on the day of wrath. Until then no temporal benefit for the people will result from their conspiracy, but rather new increases of misery and disaster. For man is not empowered to establish new societies and unions which are opposed to the nature of mankind. If these conspiracies... there can only be one result: if the present political arrangement is shaken violently and totally ruined by reciprocal attacks of citizens against citizens by their wrongful appropriations and slaughter, in the end some few, enriched by the plunder of many, will seize supreme control to the ruin of all¹⁰.

Confronting the danger of these ideologies, Roman pontiff forewarns the soul pastors, impelling them to be zealous and to defend catholic religion from those who, their actions and books, spread these theories in the midst of Christian population.

3.1.4. Encyclical *Quanta cura*

With all existent opposition, in December 8, 1864, during the solemnity of Immaculate Conception, Pius IX issued the encyclical *Quanta cura*. There, the pope condemns in solemn terms the modernity errors: rationalism of Christ Divinity; Gallicanism that controlled Church on behalf of state; socialism that subordinated family to the state; state monopoly on education or „statolatry”; retrenchment of religious orders, claimed by

⁹ *Recueil...*, 248-250 (249-251).

¹⁰ *Recueil...*, 252 (253).

modern conception about state; economists' doctrine that considered social organization to be a modality for obtaining material goods. The pope denied, especially, naturalism or modern faith in progress, because this proclaimed secularization of all institutions, equality of everybody before the law, full freedom of conscience and press¹¹.

Communism is condemned in this encyclical in the following terms:

Moreover, not content with removing religion from public society, they wish to banish it also from private families. For, teaching and professing the most fatal error of „Communism and Socialism,” they assert that „domestic society or the family derives the whole principle of its existence from the civil law alone; and, consequently, that on civil law alone depend all rights of parents over their children, and especially that of providing for education.” By which impious opinions and machinations these most deceitful men chiefly aim at this result, viz., that the salutary teaching and influence of the Catholic Church may be entirely banished from the instruction and education of youth, and that the tender and flexible minds of young men may be infected and depraved by every most pernicious error and vice. For all who have endeavored to throw into confusion things both sacred and secular, and to subvert the right order of society, and to abolish all rights, human and divine, have always (as we above hinted) devoted all their nefarious schemes, devices and efforts, to deceiving and depraving incautious youth and have placed all their hope in its corruption¹².

As it may be noticed, in this text, the pontiff is against communism as one of the biggest evils that can affect the family institution that is not only the society basic cell, but it is, first of all, the domestic Church. Besides this, in his care for new generation, the pontiff condemns communism also because he is against any type of religious instruction, a fact that can affect youth, malleable enough to be deceived and depraved.

The encyclical concludes with *Syllabus*, that we made reference above, and includes communism and socialism among the errors of modern times, reminding previous documents where these two ideologies were condemned.

3.2. Leon XIII

In February 20, 1878, after only two days of conclave, the successor of Pius IX on pontifical throne was elected Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci, who took the name of Leon XIII, his papacy being the fourth as duration of the Catholic Church history. Regarding the condemnation of his times errors, generally, is situated on the line with his predecessor Pius IX, even if in some respects he is more conciliatory.

¹¹ Petru CIOBANU, „Encyclical *Quanta cura* and *Syllabus* of Pope Pius IX in the context of fight against liberalism”, *Historical newsletter* 11 (2011), 192.

¹² *Recueil...*, p. 6 (7).

The papacy of Leon XIII coincides mostly with Marxism apogee: Marx died in 1883, but in 1876 he succeeded to publish the first part of his main work, *The Capital*, the other two parts being published posthumously, in 1885 and in 1894, by Engels¹³.

Leon XIII speaks about socialism in three encyclicals, but in none he provides, however, a systematic deny of socialist doctrine in his whole, a fact that can be explained by the fact that the pope doesn't have the mission to reject the social systems, but to report and condemn errors that exist in these systems¹⁴.

3.2.1. Encyclical *Quod apostolici muneris*

In this encyclical, issued in December 28, 1878, the pope denies the socialist doctrine of right equality to revolution, materialism and opposes to it the Church traditional doctrine. He defined communism as „the deadly plague that is creeping into the very fibers of human society and leading it on to the verge of destruction”¹⁵.

3.2.2. Encyclical *Rerum novarum*

Emblematic to his magisterium remains to be the encyclical *Rerum novarum*, issued in May 15, 1891, considered to be the foundation stone of Catholic Church social doctrine.

Rerum novarum, with an exceptional clarity, due to times, acknowledge the situation, still precarious enough and sometimes even tragic of the working class, constrained to live in misery and indicates the main obligations of both employers and workers¹⁶. Here, the pope wants to provide, firstly, a positive solution to the crucial problems of his time: the miserable conditions of working class. Before indicating the Christian solution, the pope examines and denies socialist solution, that proposed the collectivization of production goods¹⁷.

The II part of Leonean encyclical is dedicated to socialism as false remedy to social problems. But Leon XIII is not limited only to socialism condemnation, as Pius IX did in previous, but explains him the doctrine reasons, contesting to the socialism ideology the pretention to abolish the private ownership and to transform it in collective ownership. Socialism deny, the

¹³ Constant VAN GESTEL, *La doctrine sociale de l'Église*, Pensée catholique, Paris 1963; trad. it., *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, Città Nuova, Rome 1965, 573.

¹⁴ Cf. Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 574.

¹⁵ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Quod apostolici muneris*: ASS IX (1878) 372.

¹⁶ Cf. Lilia SEBASTIANI, „Rerum novarum”, in *Dizionario teologico enciclopedico*, 889.

¹⁷ Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 574.

pope makes it on the general principles of Christian philosophy, as he makes with liberal ideology as well¹⁸.

Naming it „false remedy”, Leon XIII indicates firstly what socialism consists of:

To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man’s envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights, inasmuch as each citizen will then get his fair share of whatever there is to enjoy¹⁹.

The deny follows immediately:

But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community²⁰.

After developing these problems through a scholastic argumentation, the pope concludes:

Hence, it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal²¹.

This deny refers only to one of socialism theses – collectivism – but as it represents the last aim of movement, this refers the system essence itself. But the most radical opposition between socialism and Christianity may be found in everybody’s ideas: on one hand, we have a conception about life open to eternity, and on the other hand, a limited conception to this world²².

Further, Leon XIII affirms that denying private ownership and transforming it in collective ownership strikes the family as well, and it makes the future dangerous:

It is natural that he should wish that his children, who carry on... should be by him provided with all that is needful to enable them to keep themselves decently

¹⁸ Cf. Cf. Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduzione alla dottrina sociale de la Chiesa*, Queriniana, Brescia 2006; tran. romanian, *Introducere în doctrina socială a Bisericii*, Sapientia, Iași 2010, 30.

¹⁹ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 642.

²⁰ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 642.

²¹ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 647.

²² Cf. Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 575.

from want and misery amid the uncertainties of this mortal life. Now, in no other way can a father effect this except by the ownership of productive property, which he can transmit to his children by inheritance²³.

In front of socialist theories that allowed the state to interfere in the family life, Leon XIII responds writing: „The socialists, therefore, in setting aside the parent and setting up a State supervision, act against natural justice, and destroy the structure of the home”²⁴. Then, show the consequences of this system:

And in addition to injustice, it is only too evident what an upset and disturbance there would be in all classes, and to how intolerable and hateful a slavery citizens would be subjected. The door would be thrown open to envy, to mutual invective, and to discord; the sources of wealth themselves would run dry, for no one would have any interest in exerting his talents or his industry; and that ideal equality about which they entertain pleasant dreams would be in reality the leveling down of all to a like condition of misery and degradation²⁵.

3.2.3. Encyclical *Graves de communi re*

The encyclical *Graves de communi re* was issued in January 18, 1901, Leon XIII explaining here the terms „social democracy” and „Christian democracy”, this being a new occasion for Roman pontiff to be against socialism:

What Social Democracy is and what Christian Democracy ought to be, assuredly no one can doubt. The first, with due consideration to the greater or less intemperance of its utterance, is carried to such an excess by many as to maintain that there is really nothing existing above the natural order of things, and that the acquirement and enjoyment of corporal and external goods constitute man’s happiness. It aims at putting all government in the hands of the masses, reducing all ranks to the same level, abolishing all distinction of class, and finally introducing community of goods. Hence, the right to own private property is to be abrogated, and whatever property a man possesses, or whatever means of livelihood he has, is to be common to all²⁶.

3.3. *Pius X*

Giuseppe Sarto was elected as pope in August 4, 1903, in his magisterium being more against modernism and only in the encyclical *Il fermo proposito* (June 11, 1905) making a short reference to socialism, when he urges the priests to dedicate themselves to the improvement „he can labor

²³ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 645-646.

²⁴ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 647.

²⁵ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Rerum novarum*: ASS XXIII (1890-1891) 647.

²⁶ LEON XIII, Enc. let. *Graves de communi re* (January 18, 1901): ASS XXXIII (1900-1901) 587.

on behalf of the people according to the principles of justice and charity by favoring and promoting those institutions which propose to protect the masses from the invasion of Socialism”²⁷.

3.4. *Benedict XV*

Giacomo della Chiesa was elected as pope in September 3, 1914, being crowned in September 6, the same year, given that in Europe burst out the First World War (July 28, 1914). He was a promoter of peace, many of his interventions being calls for ceasefire. During his papacy, in Russia took place the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), after it had the Soviet power with communist direction. Even at the beginning of his papacy, on the same line with his predecessors, especially with Leon XIII, he was against socialist theories.

3.4.1. Encyclical *Ad beatissimi*

The encyclical *Ad beatissimi* was issued in November 1, 1914 and represents the programmatical encyclical of the new papacy. Here, Benedict XV condemns socialism especially as promoter of class strike, one „of those four points of disorder where so grave disturbances come in the society”²⁸. First of all, the pope condemns the class strike and equality theories promoted by socialists writing:

Once they have been imbued with the fallacies of the agitators, to whose behests they are most docile, who will ever make them see that it does not follow that because men are equal by their nature, they must all occupy an equal place in the community? And further, who will ever make them see that the position of each one is that which each by use of his natural gifts-unless prevented by force of circumstances-is able to make for himself? And so the poor who strive against the rich as though they had taken part of the goods of others, not merely act contrary to justice and charity, but also act irrationally, particularly as they themselves by honest industry can improve their fortunes if they choose... Brotherly love is not calculated to get rid of the differences of conditions and therefore of classes-a result which is just as impossible as that in the living body all the members should have the same functions and dignity-but²⁹.

Referring strictly to socialism, Benedict XV retakes the condemnation that his predecessors made:

It is not our intention here to repeat the arguments which clearly expose the errors of Socialism and of similar doctrines. Our predecessor, Leo XIII, most

²⁷ PIUS X, Enc. let. *Il fermo proposito* (June 11, 1905): ASS XXXVII (1904-1905) 765.

²⁸ BENEDICT XV, Enc. let. *Ad beatissimi* (November 1, 1914): AAS 18 (November 18, 1914) 568.

²⁹ BENEDICT XV, Enc. let. *Ad beatissimi*: AAS 18 (November 18, 1914) 572.

wisely did so in truly memorable Encyclicals; and you, Venerable Brethren, will take the greatest care that those grave precepts are never forgotten³⁰.

The Roman pontiff is also against the vision of the earthly happiness belonging to socialism, showing that,

once the plastic minds of children have been moulded by godless schools, and the ideas of the inexperienced masses have been formed by a bad daily or periodical press, and when by means of all the other influences which direct public opinion, there has been instilled into the minds of men that most pernicious error that man must not hope for a state of eternal happiness; but that it is here, here below, that he is to be happy in the enjoyment of wealth and honour and pleasure: what wonder that those men whose very nature was made for happiness should with all the energy which impels them to seek that very good, break down whatever delays or impedes their obtaining it³¹.

3.4.2. Motu proprio *Bonum sane*

This *motu proprio* was issued by Pope Benedict XV in July 25, 1920, being dedicated to St. Joseph, with the occasion of 50 years from proclamation of Holy Virgin Mary husband as head of universal Church by Pope Pius IX in 1870. In this document the pontiff is against socialism and his ideas:

Indeed, the realizing idea of a universal republic coming matured in covenants and waiting for the most dangerous instigators to disorder, based on the absolute equality principles of people and goods communion, where any distinction of nationality would be thrown away and wouldn't recognize neither the authority of father on children, nor the authority of public powers on citizens, not the authority of God on human society. Applied, these theories may make place to a regime of unheard terror, as that one a notable part of Europe is experiencing now. This sad regime is extending to other people as well; we see the audacity of some exalted raising plebs and causing here and there big rebellions³².

At the same time, having care to attention the believers regarding the danger represented by socialism, Benedict XV proposes St. Joseph to them as model of gaining existence:

For the same reason, for reminding to our sons, everybody and everywhere, the duty of gaining existence through the labour of their hands and for preserving them immune to socialism contagiousness, this deadly enemy of Christian teaching, we, with great care, propose insistently St. Joseph as model of head that has to be especially imitated and honoured³³.

³⁰ BENEDICT XV, Enc. let. *Ad beatissimi*: AAS 18 (November 18, 1914) 572.

³¹ BENEDICT XV, Enc. let. *Ad beatissimi*: AAS 18 (November 18, 1914) 573.

³² BENEDICT XV, Motu proprio *Bonum sane* (July 25, 1920): AAS 8 (August 2, 1920) 314.

³³ BENEDICT XV, Motu proprio *Bonum sane*: AAS 8 (August 2, 1920) 315.

3.5. Pius XI

Achille Ratti was elected as the 259th Roman pontiff in February 6, 1922, his papacy unfolding during the whole interwar periods, till February 10, 1939, when on Europe hovered clouds of a new world conflict. Affirmation of communist theories and instauration of socialist regimes or such attempts offered to Pius XI the occasion to be vehemently against socialism and communism, the culminant point being represented by the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* from March 19, 1937. He is the pontiff who from the Peter's chair height condemned all totalitarian regimes that had been already established in Europe. Thus, in June 20, 1931, through the encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno*, denied fascist regime that was leading Italy since 1922; in March 14, 1937, through encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, condemned the German national-socialist (Nazi) regime.

And before 1937 Pius XI was against communism, a list of documents where this one is condemned being included in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*. Some of these pontifical acts will be analyzed further, following as a coronation, to present the encyclical from March 19, 1937.

3.5.1. Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*

The encyclical was issued in May 15, 1931, being on the occasion of 40 anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Leon XIII.

Analyzing the transformations after *Rerum novarum*, Pius XI doesn't avoid affirming that real socialism is not presented univocally. Along with communism, that, „when it has come to power, it is incredible and portentlike in its cruelty and inhumanity”³⁴, was formed a moderated socialism as well, that seems to „approaches the truths which Christian tradition has always held sacred; for it cannot be denied that its demands at times come very near those that Christian reformers of society justly insist upon”³⁵.

It is impossible to have a compromise between socialism and Catholicism. This vision of Pius XI is justified by three arguments: 1) evolution within socialism, that created the so-called „moderated socialism”, was not realized within all socialist parties; 2) this evolution doesn't involve abandonment, but only the attenuation of class strike; 3) there is a vain hope and a deplorable tactics in trying to attract socialists risking to lose the integrity of Catholic doctrine. Indeed, the Church can't surrender to any comma of the truth treasure that was entrusted to it³⁶.

³⁴ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Quadragesimo anno* (May 15, 1931): AAS 6 (June 1, 1931) 213.

³⁵ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 6 (June 1, 1931) 213.

³⁶ Cf. Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 586.

Before constituting Catholic socialist associations, as that from Austria, *Quadragesimo anno*, answering to the demand of Vienne nuncio, it is answered:

And numerous are the Catholics who, although they clearly understand that Christian principles can never be abandoned or diminished seem to turn their eyes to the Holy See and earnestly beseech Us to decide whether this form of Socialism has so far recovered from false doctrines that it can be accepted without the sacrifice of any Christian principle and in a certain sense be baptized. That We, in keeping with Our fatherly solicitude, may answer their petitions, We make this pronouncement: Whether considered as a doctrine, or an historical fact, or a movement, Socialism, if it remains truly Socialism..., cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth³⁷.

Nevertheless, Pope Pius XI concludes,

if Socialism, like all errors, contains some truth, it is based nevertheless on a theory of human society peculiar to itself and irreconcilable with true Christianity. Religious socialism, Christian socialism, are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist³⁸.

3.5.2. Encyclical *Caritate Christi*

The encyclical *Caritate Christi* was issued in May 3, 1932 and it is dedicated to Sacred Heart of Jesus. By it, the Roman pontiff stimulates the believers to use it for „endeavor to withstand, by every possible effort, the calamities by which civil society is now afflicted and those yet graver calamities threatening it in the future” and, thus, to be united „all our forces together into one solid band against these hostile ranks which are hostile both to God and to mankind”³⁹.

Among these „ranks” Pius XI includes communists as well, he writes about them:

Furthermore – and this may be called the most perilous of all these evils – the enemies of all order, whether they be called Communists or by some other name, exaggerating the very grave straits of the economic crisis, in this great perturbation of morals, with extreme audacity, direct all their efforts to one end, seeking to cast away every bridle from their necks, and breaking the bonds of all law both human and divine, wage an atrocious war against all religion and against God Himself; in this it is their purpose to uproot utterly all knowledge and sense of religion from the minds of men, even from the tenderest age, for they know

³⁷ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 6 (June 1, 1931) 215.

³⁸ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 6 (June 1, 1931) 216. Cf. Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduction in Church social doctrine*, 36.

³⁹ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Caritate Christi* (May 3, 1932): AAS 6 (June 1, 1932) 178, 183.

well that if once the Divine law and knowledge were blotted out from the minds of men there would now be nothing that they could not arrogate to themselves⁴⁰.

3.5.7. Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*

In this encyclical, issued in 1937, in March 19, in the solemnity of St. Joseph, head of universal Church, Pius XI analyzes and denies atheist communism, because Christian civilization, established by Jesus Christ is jeopardy by „is bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization”⁴¹ through its principles of dialectical and historical materialism. The document is divided in five main sections: I) Church attitude towards communism; II) Communism doctrine and its consequences; III) Church bright doctrine; IV) Remedies and means; V) Ministers and aids of this Church social work⁴².

The encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* is the most important communism doctrinal treating. Pius XI begins by reminding the teaching of his predecessors and his own interventions⁴³. However, „yet despite Our frequent and paternal warning the peril only grows greater from day to day because of the pressure exerted by clever agitators”⁴⁴.

In the second part of the encyclical, the pope describes pseudo-mysticism, materialistic communism doctrine and its consequences in private, family and civil life⁴⁵. Thus, about so-called mysticism, the pope finds:

The Communism of today, more emphatically than similar movements in the past, conceals in itself a false messianic idea. A pseudo-ideal of justice, of equality and fraternity in labor impregnates all its doctrine and activity with a deceptive mysticism, which communicates a zealous and contagious enthusiasm to the multitudes entrapped by delusive promises⁴⁶.

Referring to materialism related to communism, materialism that was preached by the ideologists of this movement, Pius XI writes:

The doctrine of modern Communism, which is often concealed under the most seductive trappings, is in substance based on the principles of dialectical and

⁴⁰ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Caritate Christi*: AAS 6 (June 1, 1932) 180.

⁴¹ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937): AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 66.

⁴² Cf. Hervé CARRIERE, *The Social Doctrine of the Church revisited. A Guide for study*, Pontificio Consiglio „Iustitia et Pax”, Città del Vaticano 1990; trans. It., *Dottrina sociale. Nuovo approccio all'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1993, 98.

⁴³ Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 601.

⁴⁴ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 68.

⁴⁵ Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 602.

⁴⁶ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 69.

historical materialism previously advocated by Marx, of which the theoreticians of bolshevism claim to possess the only genuine interpretation. According to this doctrine there is in the world only one reality, matter, the blind forces of which evolve into plant, animal and man... In such a doctrine, as is evident, there is no room for the idea of God; there is no difference between matter and spirit, between soul and body; there is neither survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life. Insisting on the dialectical aspect of their materialism, the Communists claim that the conflict which carries the world towards its final synthesis can be accelerated by man. Hence they endeavor to sharpen the antagonisms which arise between the various classes of society. Thus the class struggle with its consequent violent hate and destruction takes on the aspects of a crusade for the progress of humanity. On the other hand, all other forces whatever, as long as they resist such systematic violence, must be annihilated as hostile to the human race⁴⁷.

Another point treated by the pontiff is regarding to the fate of human being and family, as it is seen by communism:

Communism, moreover, strips man of his liberty, robs human personality of all its dignity, and removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse. There is no recognition of any right of the individual in his relations to the collectivity; no natural right is accorded to human personality... In man's relations with other individuals, besides, Communists hold the principle of absolute equality, rejecting all hierarchy and divinely-constituted authority, including the authority of parents... Nor is the individual granted any property rights over material goods or the means of production... Refusing to human life any sacred or spiritual character, such a doctrine logically makes of marriage and the family a purely artificial and civil institution, the outcome of a specific economic system. There exists no matrimonial bond of a juridico-moral nature that is not subject to the whim of the individual or of the collectivity. Naturally, therefore, the notion of an indissoluble marriage-tie is scouted. Communism is particularly characterized by the rejection of any link that binds woman to the family and the home⁴⁸.

More, the pope says that communism doesn't allow woman to be a woman, averting her from domestic life and care of children who are left to the community. Woman, as the man, is „thrown” in public life and collective production process⁴⁹. Could we speak here about woman emancipation, as says communism, or it is more woman, mother and wife defeminisation?

Another consequence that communist theories may provoke, after that Pius XI provided those ones for individual and family, refers to society. He asks himself: „What would be the condition of a human society based on such materialistic tenets?” and answers:

⁴⁷ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 69.

⁴⁸ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 70-71.

⁴⁹ Cf. PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 71.

It would be a collectivity with no other hierarchy than that of the economic system. It would have only one mission: the production of material things by means of collective labor, so that the goods of this world might be enjoyed in a paradise where each would „give according to his powers” and would „receive according to his needs”⁵⁰.

Collectivity, says the pope, is not other thing than to serve the man, without being interested in his own good. Man’s enslavement is made „even violence could be legitimately exercises to dragoon the recalcitrant against their wills”. Communism, says Pius XI, „claim to inaugurate a new era and a new civilization which is the result of blind evolutionary forces culminating in a humanity without God”⁵¹.

Concluding the analyzis of communist doctrines, Pope Pius XI writes:

Such, Venerable Brethren, is the new gospel which bolshevistic and atheistic Communism offers the world as the glad tidings of deliverance and salvation! It is a system full of errors and sophisms. It is in opposition both to reason and to Divine Revelation. It subverts the social order, because it means the destruction of its foundations; because it ignores the true origin and purpose of the State; because it denies the rights, dignity and liberty of human personality⁵².

After showing the features of communist doctrine and its consequences for the individual, family and society, Pius XI provides the painful consequences, already visible in Russia⁵³, Mexico⁵⁴ and Spain⁵⁵, deploring the condemnation and assasination of clerics and laymen⁵⁶.

⁵⁰ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 71.

⁵¹ Cf. PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 71-72.

⁵² PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 72.

⁵³ In October 1917, after the Bolshevik Revolution, in Russia the monarchy was overthrown and it was instaurated socialist ordering, a fact that lead to civil war, that lasted since 1918 till 1923, finishing with the victory of Bolshevik forces. In December 30, 1922, by signing the Treaty between Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Ukraine, Belarus and TranscaucasiaUSSR was born, an empire that will exist till 1991. Persecution against religion assumed to USSR maximum rates, especially in the first part of Stalin governing (till the beginning of Soviet-German war in 1941).

⁵⁴ In 1926, president of Mexico, the communist Plutarco Elías Calles, who affirmed that „Church itself is the cause of all Mexico evils”, he issued a decree known as „Calles Law”, where the anticlerical provisions of Mexican Constitution from 1917 were reconfirmed. This fact lead to rebellion of so-called „cristeros” (= Christ partisans), also called „Cristiada”. Another consequence of this law was the fact that during 1926-1934 there were assasinated at least 40 priests. If before the rebellion in Mexico there were over 4.500 priests, in 1934 remained only 334 priests authorized by state for 15 million of believers. In 1935, 17 Mexican states didn’t have a clergy (cf. http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legge_Calles, [accessed at 11.03.2014]).

⁵⁵ The pope refers to civil war burst in Spain in 1936 between nationalists lead by the General Francisco Franco and Marxist Republicans, ardent persecutors of Catholic Church.

⁵⁶ Cf. PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 74-76.

But, especially,

For the first time in history we are witnessing a struggle, cold-blooded in purpose and mapped out to the least detail, between man and „all that is called God” (2*Thes* 2,4). Communism is by its nature anti-religious. It considers religion as „the opiate of the people” because the principles of religion which speak of a life beyond the grave dissuade the proletariat from the dream of a Soviet paradise which is of this world⁵⁷.

But, here says Pius XI, communism couldn't and will not be able to realize its aims even on economic plan. Even if in Russia it got some material successes, it didn't succeed to accomplish what it promised, „in spite of slavery imposed on millions of men”, slavery that as the pontiff says, in a such system, replaces the morality⁵⁸.

Pope's condemnation doesn't refer

en masse the peoples of the Soviet Union. For them We cherish the warmest paternal affection. We are well aware that not a few of them groan beneath the yoke imposed on them by men who in very large part are strangers to the real interests of the country. We recognize that many others were deceived by fallacious hopes. We blame only the system, with its authors and abettors⁵⁹.

In the third part of the encyclical, the pope opposes to communist doctrine the bright teaching of Church and in the forth part he indicates the remedies and means that must be used for society rescue. Pius XI launches an appeal to the ministers and Church social work auxiliaries: priests, laymen, *Catholic Action* and related organizations, professional organizations, especially of workers, everybody who believes in God. Finally, he addresses to those who were seduced by communism and he concludes his encyclical putting the action of Catholic Church against communism under the powerful head of Church, St. Joseph, he himself being a worker⁶⁰.

3.7. Pius XII

Elected on the throne of St. Peter in the year when Second World War started, Eugenio Pacelli dedicated his first years of papacy to the effort to restore peace in the world, being, in majority of his interventions, against slaughter that included especially Europe, memorable remaining his phrase: „Nothing is lost with peace, everything may be lost with war”⁶¹.

⁵⁷ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 76.

⁵⁸ Cf. PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 76-77.

⁵⁹ PIUS XI, Enc. let. *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 4 (March 31, 1937) 77.

⁶⁰ Constant VAN GESTEL, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 604.

⁶¹ PIUS XII, *Radio message addressed to governors and people in imminent danger of war*: AAS 10 (September 11, 1939) 334.

But, in front of communism advance towards Central Europe, ascent to power, in some western countries, of left parties, of oppression started by communist Governments from Eastern Europe against Catholic Church, after the war, Pius XII takes attitude towards communism and is openly against it.

3.7.1. Decree of the Holy Office from July 1, 1949

In July 1, 1949, with approval of Holy Father, the Holy Office, current Congregation for Faith Doctrine, issued a document that, besides all previous doctrinal condemnations, imposes some disciplinary sanctions to the believers who supported and favoured communism. Here it is the entire text of this decree:

To this Supreme Congregation there were addressed the following questions:

1. whether it is lawful to join Communist Parties or to favour them;
2. whether it is lawful to publish, disseminate, or read books, periodicals, newspapers or leaflets which support the teaching or action of Communists, or to write in them;
3. whether the faithful who knowingly and freely perform the acts specified in questions 1 and 2 may be admitted to the Sacraments;
4. whether the faithful who profess the materialistic and anti-Christian doctrine of the Communists, and particularly those who defend or propagate this doctrine, contract *ipso facto* excommunication specially reserved to the Apostolic See as apostates from the Catholic faith.

The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers entrusted with the supervision of matters concerning the safeguarding of Faith and morals, having previously heard the opinion of the Reverend Lords Consultors, decreed in the plenary session held on Tuesday (instead of Wednesday), June 28, 1949, that the answers should be as follows:

To 1. in the negative: because Communism is materialistic and anti-Christian; and the leaders of the Communists, although they sometimes profess in words that they do not oppose religion, do in fact show themselves, both in their teaching and in their actions, to be the enemies of God, of the true religion and of the Church of Christ;

to 2. in the negative: they are prohibited *ipso iure* (cf. Can. 1399 of the *Codex Iuris Canonici*);

to 3. in the negative, in accordance with the ordinary principles concerning the refusal of the Sacraments to those who are not disposed;

to 4. in the affirmative⁶².

⁶² CONGREGATION OF HOLY OFFICE, *Decree. Answer concerning doubts regarding communism*, in AAS 8 (July 2, 1949) 334.

The meaning of this decree was taken by Pius XII in the radio message addressed to the Congress LXXIII of German Catholics, regarding the new social order, from September 4, 1949. In it, Pope Pacelli declares that anti-communism of the Church is inspired only from the care to save Christian civilization:

When recently a binding for all Catholics dividing line has been drawn between the Catholic faith and the atheistic communism, so it was for the same reason, namely to raise a dam to save – not only the workers but all without exception, before God and the worship negating Marxism⁶³.

3.7.2. Apostolic letter *Sacro vergente anno*

The apostolic letter *Sacro vergente anno* was issued by Pope Pius XII in July 7, 1952 and, through it, he was dedicating Russia to Immaculate Heart of Mary. Having in his eyes the situation of Christians from Soviet colossus, Pius XII always condemns communism, writing:

Undoubtedly, we condemned and rejected – as the obligation of our service requires – errors that authors of atheistic communism learn them and are striving to propagate to great damage and destruction of citizens... I have revealed and reproved these lies, they are often presented in false appearances of truth, just because we have towards you (Russian peoples – Ed.) a fatherly affection and we seek for your good. Indeed, we are firmly ensured that these errors can cause you only multiple damages because they do not only remove from your soul that supernatural light and those supreme caresses originating from piety and worship to God, but they also plunder you from human dignity and true freedom due to citizens⁶⁴.

3.7.3. Christmas radio message „*Col cuore aperto*” from 1955

In the *Christmas radio message* from 1955, Pope Pacelli returns to communism condemnation:

We reject communism as a social system under Christian doctrine and must affirm especially the foundations of natural law. For the same reason, we reject the opinion that Christian should see communism as a phenomenon or a stage along history, almost a necessary evolutionary moment of it, and to accept it, therefore, as being practically decreed by divine Providence⁶⁵.

⁶³ PIUS XII, *Radio message addressed to the participants of Congress LXXIII of German Catholics* (September 4, 1949): AAS 41 (1949) 461.

⁶⁴ PIUS XII, *Ap. let. Sacro vergente anno* (July 7, 1952): AAS 44 (1952) 505-511.

⁶⁵ PIUS XII, *Christmas radio message* (December 24, 1955): AAS 1 (January 28, 1956)

3.7.5. Interventions of Pius XII in the context of persecutions of Catholic Church from Eastern European countries

Before the persecution initiated by communist regimes established in Eastern European countries against Church, Pope Pius XII reacts with a series of letters by which he joins the sufferings endured by Catholic believers, no matter what rite they are, from these countries.

In October 28, 1951, Pius XII addresses with the apostolic letter *Impensiore caritate* to believers from Czechoslovakia, where he deplores the situation of Catholic Church from this country⁶⁶, as he does in March 25, 1952, when he addresses bishops, clergy and Romanian people the apostolic letter *Veritatem facientes*. In it, indirectly, he condemns communism because of its anticatholic attitude, showed, especially, by outlawing Greek-Catholic Church, by prohibiting religious communities, by nationalizing (the pope speaks about prohibition) confessional schools, by arresting, exiling or imposing to forced works of clergy, by repealing the right to access of Catholics to written mass-media⁶⁷. Oppressed religion, „ the foundations of society themselves are shaking, and citizens cannot achieve real prosperity and happiness”⁶⁸.

In June 29, 1956, during the solemnity of apostles Peter and Paul, Pius XII issues the apostolic letter *Dum maerenti animo* about persecuted Church in Eastern Europe. The pontiff starts his letter writing that, with grieving heart, while he remembers the situation of Churches in the region in the middle of XV century, when they were threatened by Ottoman danger, takes into consideration their actual grave situation because of persecutions they are suffering on behalf of atheist materialism, and then he enumerates the grave conditions:

As you know from experience, for more than ten years, the Church of Christ is private, although not everywhere in the same way, the rights to his pious and religious associations are dissolved and dispersed violently; sacred pastors are hindered in their serving when they are not deported, exiled or imprisoned;

⁶⁶ PIUS XII, Ap. let. *Impensiore caritate* (October 28, 1951): AAS 16 (November 15, 1951) 768-772.

⁶⁷ Romanian Greek-Catholic Church was thrown out of law by a governmental decree in December 1, 1948 and stopped to exist officially. All bishops were arrested, incarcerated or expelled in the decree moment; foreign Catholic priests were expelled and a part of the Romanian ones were closed as well. Greek-Catholic bishoprics were dissolved; only two out of five Romano-Catholic dioceses were officially recognized. All Church schools and instituts were closed. As in other countries, communist regime from Romania tried to create a schismatic (national) Catholic Church. Catholic mass-media was thrown out of law and closed; all religious houses were seized and closed (Emil DIAC, *Pope Pius XII, defender of human rights*, Sapientia, Iasi 2013, 121-122).

⁶⁸ PIUS XII, Ap. let. *Veritatem facientes* (March 25, 1952): AAS 5 (April 12, 1952) 249-253.

even it is claiming, with an arbitrary courage, to suppress Eastern Rite dioceses and pushing, by all means, the clergy and believers to schism. We know, moreover, that not a few are persecuted in every way because they freely and courageously their faith and because they defend it valiantly. What saddens us most is that the minds of children and young people are stuffed with false and perverted teachings in order to remove them from God and His holy commandments, with great damage to present life and danger to the future one⁶⁹.

Nor the Hungarian people was deprived of parental care of Pope Pius XII, especially after the tragic events from 1956, when the Soviet tanks drown in blood the so-called Hungarian revolt. A first intervention in favour of Hungarian Christians was the encyclical *Luctuosissimi eventus* from October 28, 1956, where, besides the urge to pray for peace in Hungary, he condemns Soviet intervention, writing:

May all men come to realize that today's unsettled international order cannot be stabilized by an armed might which brings many to their death, nor by that violence inflicted upon citizens..., nor by those deceitful fictions which corrupt the mind and are as repugnant to the rights of a civic and Christian conscience as they are to the rights of the Church. Nor can the breath of just freedom ever be extinguished by external force⁷⁰.

After some days, there followed the encyclical *Datis nuperrime* (November 5, 1956), that returned to situation in Hungary, being condemned again Soviet intervention in this country for keeping a regime strange to Hungarian people:

There is being shed again in the cities, towns, and villages of Hungary the blood of citizens who long with all their hearts for their rightful freedom. National institutions which had just been restored have been overthrown again and violently destroyed. A blood-drenched people have been reduced once more to slavery by the armed might of foreigners⁷¹.

3.8. *John XXIII*

Years '60 and '70 represent a period of great changes. The incipient crisis of Marxist ideology and Council II from Vatican set in motion a situation wall against wall between Church and real socialism. Although all were failed, in this phase the attempts to realize different forms of „real socialism” multiply: Yugoslav „self-managed communism”, „Spring in Prague” (1968); „human socialism” in Cuba, „parlamentary Marxism” of

⁶⁹ PIUS XII, Ap. let. *Dum maerenti animo* (June 29, 1956): AAS 48 (1956) 549-554.

⁷⁰ PIUS XII, Enc. let. *Luctuosissimi eventus* (October 28, 1956): AAS 15 (October 30, 1956) 741-744.

⁷¹ PIUS XII, Enc. let. *Datis nuperrime* (November 5, 1956): AAS 16 (November 24, 1956) 748-749.

Allende in Chile. The European socialism streams take the way of western democracy and remove from Marxist ideology⁷².

Meanwhile, the Church changes its attitude and move from violent clash to dialectical confrontation, due to progresses made by conciliar renewal. In particular, the teaching of the encyclical *Pacem in terris* of Pope John XXIII was decisive, elected on the papal chair in 1958. In this encyclical, Pope Roncalli makes difference between ideology and historical movements⁷³, writing that

make a clear distinction between false philosophical teachings regarding the nature, origin, and destiny of the universe and of man, and movements which have a direct bearing either on economic and social questions, or cultural matters or on the organization of the state, even if these movements owe their origin and inspiration to these false tenets. While the teaching once it has been clearly set forth is no longer subject to change, the movements, precisely because they take place in the midst of changing conditions, are readily susceptible of change. Besides, who can deny that those movements, in so far as they conform to the dictates of right reason and are interpreters of the lawful aspirations of the human person, contain elements that are positive and deserving of approval?⁷⁴

This difference had to lead Catholics to overcoming a simply negative photics and condemnation before the historical accomplishments of different socialism forms and had to lead Church to the issue related to the presence of positive elements that respond to the men fair aspirations in historical movements born from Marxism⁷⁵.

However, two years before *Pacem in terris*, in the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, issued in May 15, 1961, John XXIII condemns communism, especially in the first part, where he analyzes previous social magisterium. Referring to the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* of Pius XI, John XXIII reminds that this one showed

the fundamental opposition between Communism and Christianity, and made it clear that no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism. The reason is that Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time and takes no account of any objective other than that of material well-being. Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority⁷⁶.

⁷² Cf. Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduction to Church social doctrine*, 48-49.

⁷³ Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduction to Church social doctrine*, 48-49.49.

⁷⁴ JOHN XXIII, Enc. let. *Pacem in terris* (April 11, 1963): AAS 5 (April 20, 1963) 300.

⁷⁵ Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduction to Church social doctrine*, 49.

⁷⁶ JOHN XXIII, Enc. let. *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961): AAS 8 (July 15, 1961) 408.

Below, writing about the right to private property, denied by Marxist ideology, John XXIII says that

history and experience testify that in those political regimes which do not recognize the rights of private ownership of goods, productive included, the exercise of freedom in almost every other direction is suppressed or stifled. This suggests, surely, that the exercise of freedom finds its guarantee and incentive in the right of ownership⁷⁷.

In the forth part of the encyclical, the pope analyzes truncated or erroneous ideologies and, even without mentioning them explicitly, he condemns communist theories (and not only that):

The attempt to find a solution to this problem has given birth to a number of theories. Some of these – were little more than ephemeral; others have undergone, and are still undergoing, substantial change; others again are proving themselves less and less attractive to modern man. Why is this? It is because these ideologies do not take account of the whole man, nor even of his most important part. In particular, they take little account of certain inevitable human weaknesses such as sickness and suffering, weaknesses which even the most advanced economic and social systems cannot completely eliminate. Finally, they fail to take account of that deep-rooted sense of religion which exists in all men everywhere, and which nothing, neither violence nor cunning, can eradicate. The most fundamental modern error is that of imagining that man's natural sense of religion is nothing more than the outcome of feeling or fantasy, to be eradicated from his soul as an anachronism and an obstacle to human progress⁷⁸.

Then, the pope shows the worst error of modernity, condemning, indirectly communism as well:

The most perniciously typical aspect of the modern era consists in the absurd attempt to reconstruct a solid and fruitful temporal order divorced from God, who is, in fact, the only foundation on which it can endure. In seeking to enhance man's greatness, men fondly imagine that they can do so by drying up the source from which that greatness springs and from which it is nourished. They want, that is, to restrain and, if possible, to eliminate the soul's upward surge toward God⁷⁹.

3.9. Paul VI

Conciliar renewal started by St. John XXIII was continued by his successor on St. Peter's throne, blessed Pope Paul VI, elected in 1963 and who lead Church destinies till 1978.

⁷⁷ JOHN XXIII, Enc. let. *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 8 (July 15, 1961) 427.

⁷⁸ JOHN XXIII, Enc. let. *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 8 (July 15, 1961) 451-452.

⁷⁹ JOHN XXIII, Enc. let. *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 8 (July 15, 1961) 452-453.

3.9.1. Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*

In the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, issued in August 6, 1964, Pope Paul VI condemns atheist ideologies, that do not only deny God, but confess openly and support a program of human education and political behaviour that aims „are setting men free from false and outworn notions about life and the world and are, they claim, putting in their place a scientific conception that is in conformity with the needs of modern progress”⁸⁰. And the Pope goes on:

This is the most serious problem of our time. We are firmly convinced that the theory on which the denial of God is based is utterly erroneous. This theory is not in keeping with the basic, undeniable requirements of thought. It deprives the reasonable order of the world of its genuine foundation. This theory does not provide human life with a liberating formula but with a blind dogma which degrades and saddens it. This theory destroys, at the root, any social system which attempts to base itself upon it. It does not bring freedom. It is a sham, attempting to quench the light of the living God... These are the reasons which compel us, as they compelled our predecessors and, with them, everyone who has religious values at heart, to condemn the ideological systems which deny God and oppress the church-systems which are often identified with economic, social and political regimes, amongst which atheistic communism is the chief. It could be said that it is not so much that we condemn these systems and regimes as that they express their radical opposition to us in thought and deed. Our regret is, in reality, more sorrow for a victim than the sentence of a judge⁸¹.

After declaring this condemnation, Paul VI refers to Church of silence, in other words, to so many local Churches, especially in Eastern Europe, reduced to silence by atheist regimes that had there the power⁸².

3.9.2. Encyclical *Populorum progressio*

Even if it doesn't speak and condemn explicitly communism, in this encyclical, issued in March 26, 1967, Paul VI makes it, however, implicitly, including communist doctrine among atheist teachings, writing that „every form of social action involves some doctrine; and the Christian rejects that which is based on a materialistic and atheistic philosophy, namely one which shows no respect for a religious outlook on life, for freedom or human dignity”⁸³.

⁸⁰ PAUL VI, Enc. let. *Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964), no. 103: AAS (August 20, 1964) 651.

⁸¹ PAUL VI, Enc. let. *Ecclesiam suam*, no. 104-105: AAS (August 20, 1964) 651-652.

⁸² Cf. PAUL VI, Enc. let. *Ecclesiam suam*, no. 107-108: AAS (August 20, 1964) 652-653.

⁸³ PAUL VI, Enc. let. *Populorum progressio* (March 26, 1967), no. 39: AAS 4 (April 15, 1967) 276.

3.9.3. Apostolic letter *Octogesima adveniens*

Pope Paul VI returns in this apostolic letter from May 14, 1971 to the same difference between ideologies and historical movements already met at John XXIII. Here, Pope Montini overcomes previous generality and applies this difference explicitly to the confrontation between Christians and Marxists. The pontiff reaffirms, first of all, the unacceptability of Marxist ideology⁸⁴, situating himself on the same line with the decree of Holy Office from 1949:

The Christian who wishes to live his faith in a political activity which he thinks of as service cannot without contradicting himself adhere to ideological systems which radically or substantially go against his faith and his concept of man. He cannot adhere to the Marxist ideology, to its atheistic materialism, to its dialectic of violence and to the way it absorbs individual freedom in the collectivity, at the same time denying all transcendence to man and his personal and collective history⁸⁵.

Further, Paul VI dedicates an ample space to the socialism analysis, where some of Christians try to recognize some of aspirations they have in the name of faith. Although different depending on continents or cultures, Paul VI writes that all its forms are, in most of cases, incompatible with faith. The pontiff condemns socialism and, as a result, „the historical socialist movements, which remain conditioned by the ideologies from which they originated”⁸⁶.

Making difference between different streams within marxism, the pope enumerates some features of these ones, that, without telling, are contrary to Christian faith: active practice of class strike, „struggle to be pursued and even stirred up in permanent fashion”⁸⁷; „the collective exercise of political and economic power under the direction of a single party, which would be the sole expression and guarantee of the welfare of all, and would deprive individuals and other groups of any possibility of initiative and choice”⁸⁸; historical materialism and deny of any transcendence. A more attenuated form, but more seductive, that Marxism wears, is, in the opinion of Paul VI, „scientific activity, as a rigorous method of examining social and political reality, and as the rational link, tested by history, between

⁸⁴ Cf. Bartolomeo SORGE, *Introduction to Church social doctrine*, 50.

⁸⁵ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens* (May 14, 1971), no. 26: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 420.

⁸⁶ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 31: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 423.

⁸⁷ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 33: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 423.

⁸⁸ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 33: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 424.

theoretical knowledge and the practice of revolutionary transformation”⁸⁹. Why is this form condemned? Because,

this type of analysis gives a privileged position to certain aspects of reality to the detriment of the rest, and interprets them in the light of its ideology, it nevertheless furnishes some people not only with a working tool but also a certitude preliminary to action: the claim to decipher in a scientific manner the mainsprings of the evolution of society⁹⁰.

Conclusions

I analyzed some of pontifical documents issued with popes’ approval, where communism is condemned, either as doctrine or as action. I concluded this presentation with Pope Paul VI, because I considered to be inopportune to present in a limited space the entire anticommunism teaching and activity of St. John Paul II, who – it is recognized by the absolute majority of historians – had an enormous contribution to communist regimes failure in Eastern Europe, fact that shows better that anything else that this pontiff, victim of this ideology, he was always against „red plague” that caused countless victims, including on faith reason, it is enough to remember the sacrifice of the blessed bishop and martyr Anton Durcovič and other bishops, priests, monks and nuns, and simple believers who remained faithful to Christ, unwilling to stain conscience betraying the Savior and Church. And, whereas *historia magistra vitae est*, their example, today, when we enjoy freedom to confess freely our faith, it must be an incentive to us to live our faith as they lived and not to allow to be seduced by other ideologies that, even don’t deny openly God, remove us from him. Let’s not prove by our life that their and other martyrs of communist regimes sacrifice was in vain, but to follow the Lamb wherever he goes (cf. *Ap* 14,4).

⁸⁹ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 33: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 424.

⁹⁰ PAUL VI, Ap. let. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 33: AAS 6 (June 30, 1971) 424.