
A Failed Council

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The non-condemnation of communism at Vatican II

By Rev. Fr. Daniel Couture

Professor Roberto de Mattei, in his The Second Vatican Council (an unwritten story) (Loreto Publications), has unearthed some most interesting information on the reason why Vatican II did not condemn communism in the very years that Russia and China were most active in supporting and spreading communism throughout the world. The Blessed Virgin Mary herself warned of the errors that would spread from Russia when she appeared to three children at Fatima in 1917, but even as her predictions were being realised in the most vivid and horrifying fashion, the shameful manoeuvres of key figures of the council arranged for it both to pass over the “the greatest theoretical and practical heresy of our times”(Card. Bacci) in sinful silence and to ignore the remedy she offered.

Set forth in logical order is the warning from heaven of the evil of the errors of Russia (which undoubtedly refers to the error of communism), then the repeated condemnations of communism by the Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, and then the betrayal by Pope Jean XXIII, Pope Paul VI and his sinister cohorts - most notably Cardinal Tisserant. (The Second Vatican Council (an unwritten story) is abbreviated as DM).

The Warning Of Dangers From Russia

1917 July 13th, Fatima Our Lady: “When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions against the Church and against the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If My requests are heeded, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions against the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.”

The Condemnation Of Communism By Popes Pius XI and Pius XII

1937 March 19th: Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* condemning communism. He first explains that he has already condemned communism in 1924, 1928, 1931, 1932 (twice) and 1933. But it is his solemn duty once more to raise his voice and remind the faithful yet again against the dangers of communism. Among many

other things, the Pope solemnly says, “Communism is intrinsically evil, and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever.”¹

1949 July 1st: Decree of the Holy Office pronouncing an excommunication incurred on any sort of collaboration with communism: “*ipso facto, tamquam apostatae a fide catholica, incurrant in excommunicationem speciali modo Sedi Apostolicae reservatam* – they incur, as having become apostate from the Catholic Faith, automatically, an excommunication reserved in a special way to the Apostolic See.”²

1958 June 29th: Pope Pius XII encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, new condemnation of communism, concerning China.³

1959 April 4th: Decree of Holy Office confirming the validity of the excommunications dated July 1st 1949, for supporting communist candidates in elections : even if they claim to be Catholic, but in fact “in their actions they associate with communists and encourage them -- *re tamen communistis sociantur et sua agendi ratione iisdem favent.*”⁴

Betrayal by Popes John XXIII And Paul VI In The Face Of Episcopal Opposition

1954 Summer: Colonel Arnould gives a secret report

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to Pius XII proving that Msgr. Montini is having relations with the Kremlin. As a result, Pius XII moves Msgr. Montini away from the Vatican by appointing him to Milan on November 1st.⁵

1954 December 12th: Milan Episcopal consecration of G.B. Montini by Cardinal Tisserant.⁶

1959-1961: Vota of the bishops: 378 bishops requested that the Council deal with modern atheism and in particular communism.⁷

1962

Sept. 27th – Oct. 2nd: Moscow, Msgr. Willebrands makes a secret trip to Moscow “to dispel the Kremlin’s anxieties about the council’s attitude toward communism. On his return to Rome, Cardinal Bea dispatched the official invitation to the patriarchate [which was controlled by the Communist Party].”⁸

October 10th: Moscow. Patriarch Alexis and his synod sent an official telegram of acceptance.⁹

October 11th: Rome. Opening of Vatican II, address of John XXIII, “Nowadays, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by more clearly demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.”¹⁰

October 12th, Rome. The two Russian observers arrived. “In more ways than one, their presence at the Council marked ‘the end of the Counter-Reformation.’”¹¹

October 20th: The council gives a vague “Message to the World”, publically opposed soon after on November 23rd by 15 Eastern-rite bishops “because it did not reflect the dramatic situation imposed by communism” in Eastern Europe and the East.¹²

November 2nd: Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira met with Cardinal Tisserant who confided to him having “participated in the negotiations with the schismatic Russian Orthodox: ‘Moscow demanded that no one speak against communism in the council, and Rome agreed.’”¹³

November 23rd: “Bishop Willebrands ... defended the Russian observers, who had ‘manifested a sincerely religious and ecumenical spirit,’ and regretted the communique of the Ukrainian bishops.”¹⁴



Cardinal Eugène Tisserant participated in the negotiations with the schismatic Russian Orthodox for the non-condemnation of communism.

1963

January 16th-22nd: Weekly edition of the French communist newspaper *France Nouvelle*: “(T)he Church can no longer be content with crude anti-communism. As part of this dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, it has even promised there will be no direct attack on the communist system at the council.”¹⁵

December 29th: A petition of 218 council fathers [for the condemnation of communism] was handed to the pope.¹⁶

1964

February 3rd: Archbishop Proença Sigaud delivers personally to Paul VI another petition signed by 510 prelates from 78 countries asking for the consecration of the world, and especially Russia, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.¹⁷

September 17th: Fr. Congar: “I am campaigning AS MUCH AS I CAN, against a consecration of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, because I can see the dan-

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ger that a move in this direction would constitute.”¹⁸

October 22nd and the following days: Many interventions in the conciliar hall asking for the condemnation of communism, “The main purpose of this council is pastoral, (...) it would be a scandal for many believers if the council were to give the impression that it was afraid to condemn the greatest crime of our age...” Bishop Barbieri, Italy.¹⁹

1965

September-October: Many more interventions for the condemnation of communism as the draft of Schema XIII (to become *Gaudium et Spes*) did not speak of communism: “History will justly accuse us of cowardice or blindness on account of this silence!” (Bishop Hnilica, who had been in concentration camps with 700 priests and religious in Czechoslovakia).²⁰

“Every time an ecumenical council has been assembled, it always resolved the major problems that were causing trouble at that time and condemned the errors of the moment. To remain silent on this point would be, I think an unpardonable lapse, as well as a collective sin... This is the greatest theoretical and practical heresy of our times; and if the council does not deal with it, it may seem to be (a) failed council.” (Cardinal Bacci)²¹

October 9th: Archbishop Lefebvre and Archbishop de Proença Sigaud submit before noon, the deadline, a petition for the condemnation of communism signed by 334 council fathers (to which 120 more names were soon after added, for a total of 454 names), from 86 countries.²²

October 11th: Msgr. Achille Glorieux, secretary, does not pass the said petition to the proper commission working on the text. “The fact that one man had been able to keep such a significant document from reaching the conciliar commission to which it was officially addressed is one of the greatest tragedies of the Second Vatican Council and may go down in history as the greatest scandal that has damaged the serious deliberations of this sacred assembly.” (Fr. Wiltgen)²³

November 11th: Appeal of Bishop Carli on the fact of having ignored the petition.²⁴

November 15th: Bishop Garrone on the contrary “declared that ‘the manner of proceeding’ was in keeping

with the ‘pastoral purpose’ of the council, with the ‘expressed will’ of John XXIII and Paul VI.”²⁵

Confidential note of Paul VI to Bishop Felici about the appeal:

15th Nov. 1965

To keep or to withdraw the appeal?

1) *Was the conduct of Mixed Commission illegal?*

2) *After the intervention ‘juxta modum’ the thesis of the petitioners would be brought to the knowledge of the fathers with the pertinent observations.*

A) *Is it prudent?*

If rejected: the council seems to have rejected the condemnation of communism, which has already been condemned.

If approved: what is the fate of the Catholics in communist countries?

B) *Is it consistent with the promises of the council?*

- *not to enter into ‘political’ topics*

- *not to pronounce anathemas*

- *not to speak about communism (1962)*²⁶

November 26th: Meeting between Paul VI, Cardinals Tisserant and Cicognani, Bps. Felici, Garrone, Dell’Acqua. “Before starting the meeting, Cardinal Tisserant had given the pope a letter in which he stated among other things:

Anathemas have never converted anyone, and although they were useful at the time of the Council of Trent, when the princes could force their subjects to convert to Protestantism, they no longer work today when everyone has the sense of his own independence. As I already told Your Holiness, a conciliar condemnation of communism would be considered by most people as a political move, something that would cause enormous damage to the authority of the council and of the Church herself”²⁷.

The meeting admitted the irregularities of the non-forwarding of the petition. “Under the heading of merit, on the other hand, all those present agreed with the position of Cardinal Tisserant and of Paul VI himself, that it was not opportune for the council to renew expressly the condemnation of communism.”²⁸

December 3th: Last appeal of the *Coetus* against the

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entire Schema XIII (*Gaudium et Spes*) “because it made no mention of communism, and because of the document’s ambiguous position on the ends of matrimony, on conscientious objection and on total war.”²⁹

December 7th: Official promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes*, sixteenth and last document of Vatican II. With seventy-five negative votes ‘non placet’. Its §21 reads thus: “The Church has already repudiated and cannot cease repudiating, sorrowfully but as firmly as possible, those poisonous doctrines and actions which contradict reason and the common experience of humanity, and dethrone man from his native excellence.”³⁰

“So it was that the council refrained from condemning communism, and in its *Acta* the very word, which had been so frequent in papal documents up to that moment, does not occur. The great gathering made specific statements about totalitarianism, capitalism and colonialism, but hid its opinion on communism inside its generic judgment on totalitarian ideologies.” (R. Amerio)³¹

Conclusion

The Mother of God is not mocked, if we be allowed to paraphrase St. Paul. When she speaks and demands something, it is in the name of God. To disobey the Queen of Heaven has terrible consequences - in this case, more than one hundred million people killed by the numerous communist revolutions since 1917 and still going on in the countries which have fallen under this regime. The fall away from the faith, of which the communist philosophy of atheistic materialism is the cause, has consequences that are more terrible still. This is the judgment of history on one single document of a council, or perhaps, on one single silence of the council. Thus, rather than being called pastoral, which means helping souls to go to heaven, Vatican II deserves to be called supremely a-pastoral for this “unpardonable lapse, as well as a collective sin” (Card. Bacci). But let us not be downcast for...

“In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, and she will be converted, and a certain period of peace will be granted to the world.”

Our Lady of Fatima, July 13th, 1917.

Notes

1. AAS 29 (1937) 65-106
2. AAS 41 (1949) 334.
3. AAS 50 (1958) 601-614
4. AAS 51 (1959) 271
5. The Whole Truth About Fatima, vol.3, pp. 454-456
6. The Whole Truth About Fatima, vol.3, pp. 460
7. Cf. V. Carbone, “Schemi e discussioni sull’ateismo e sul marxismo,” pp. 11-12 in DM 152
8. Willebrands, The meeting between Rome and Moscow: Souvenirs, in DM 150
9. DM 150
10. John XXIII, Address Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae, in AS I/1, pp.171-172 in DM 175
11. J.A. Komonchak, “The Struggle for the Council During the Preparation,” p. 326 in DM 151
12. DM 185-186
13. Maranhão Galliez, Diario, November 2, 1962 in DM 154
14. Osservatore Romano, Nov. 24, 1962 in DM 186
15. Iota Unum, p.75
16. DM 338
17. Text of the petition is in Catholicismo, 159 (1964) in DM 339
18. Emphasis in the original Journal of Congar, 578 in DM 339
19. AS III/5:363 in DM 397
20. AS IV/2:629-631 in DM 471
21. Cardinal Bacci, AS IV/2:669-670 in DM 472-473
22. Archives of Ecône (E 02-11-002) in DM 476
23. Fr. Witgen, Divine World News Services, in DM 477
24. DM 478
25. Cf. G.F. Svidercoschi in DM 478
26. Cf. ASV, Conc. Vat. II Busta 343, secretary general Sept.-Nov. 1965, memorandum from Bishop Felici dated November 15, p.2 ff. in DM 478-479
27. ASV, Conc. Vat. II, Busta 34, Tisserant to Paul VI, Rome, Nov. 26, 1965, p1. in DM 480
28. Cf. V. Carbone, “Schemi e discussioni” pp. 58-62 in DM 479-480
29. Caprile 5:497 in DM 483
30. AS IV/7:247 in DM 481
31. Iota Unum 76



Lúcia described seeing a woman “brighter than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal ball filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun”.