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***A Ordem* magazine and the 'communist scourge': on the border between the political, intellectual, and religious spheres**

A revista A Ordem e o "flagelo comunista": na fronteira entre as esferas política, intelectual e religiosa

Marco Antônio Machado Lima Pereira*

RESUMO

Nos anos 1920, durante o período da neocristandade, surgiu uma das mais influentes gerações de líderes leigos católicos na história da América Latina, reunidos em torno do Centro Dom Vital. O principal núcleo de irradiação das ideias do grupo católico foi a revista (de periodicidade mensal) *A Ordem*, lançada em 1921. A proposta deste artigo é apresentar os elementos centrais utilizados pelas elites leigas para solapar o projeto comunista, tais como: a noção de propriedade privada, a questão da organização da sociedade e a comparação entre comunismo e crenças religiosas. Entende-se aqui o conceito de "intelectuais" num sentido amplo, referindo-se mais especificamente ao papel desempenhado pelas camadas eclesásticas na luta por supremacia no campo político, intelectual e mesmo "religioso". Palavras-chave: catolicismo; comunismo; "visões de mundo".

ABSTRACT

In the 1920's, during the *Neo-Christianity* period, one of the most influential generations of Catholic lay leaders in the history of Latin America was centered around the Dom Vital Center. The main source for spreading the ideas of this group was the monthly magazine *A Ordem*, launched in 1921. The main objective of this paper was to present the core elements used by secular elites to undermine the communist project, such as the notion of private property, the question of the organization of society and the comparison between communism/religious beliefs. The concept of 'intellectual' is understood in a broader sense, specifically referring to the role played by ecclesiastical layers in the struggle for supremacy, in the political, intellectual and even the 'religious' fields.

Keywords: catholicism; communism; "visions of the world".

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We need to confront communism as a complete denial of Christ and the Church and not as a temporary phenomenon which only affects our material interests or our social positions. Its danger is much more profound.

Tristão de Ataíde

One of the great challenges of this paper is to trace new analytical parameters about the relations between intellectuals and society in Brazil in the 1930s. Based on defined theoretical and methodological criteria, it is proposed to look at the intellectual field following the indications of Karl Mannheim and Pierre Bourdieu. Noting that all the individuals in a determined 'field' share a certain number of fundamental interests, the question thereby consists of the following: did anti-communism serve as one of the principal means of galvanizing the Catholic intelligentsia, allowing the latter's action in the political process at that time?¹

The notion of 'field' is related to the space of relations between distinct social positions, the space of dispute, and the game of power. According to Bourdieu, society is composed of various fields, various spaces gifted with relative autonomy, but governed by their own rules. Nevertheless, he argues that there are general laws of fields (laws of invariant functioning), such as, for example, among the political, philosophical, and religious fields. In effect, "we know that in any field we discover a struggle, whose specific forms have to be investigated in each case, between the new which tries to break the locks of the law of entrance and the dominant who tries to defend monopoly and exclude competition" (Bourdieu, 2003, p.119-120).

We start with the premise that that it is only in a very limited sense that individuals create for themselves a manner of talking and thinking. In general, they speak the language of their group and as a result think in the way their group thinks. Each individual is "predetermined in a dual sense by the fact of growing up in a society: they find, on the one hand, a defined situation and, on the other, discover in this situation previously formed patterns of thought and conduct" (Mannheim, 1982, p.31).

The Sociology of Knowledge seeks to understand thought in a concrete context of a historical and social situation, since human thought does not emerge and operate in a social vacuum, but in a defined social environment. Individuals in groups either make an effort, according to the character and position of the groups to which they belong, to transform the world of nature and society around it, or, to the contrary, they try to maintain it in a given

situation. In summary, "the direction of this collective will of transforming and maintaining is what produces the guiding thread for the emergence of its problems, its concepts, and its forms of thought" (ibid., p.31-32).

However, it is important to emphasize that I use the word *intelligentsia* for the social groups whose specific task consists of giving society an interpretation of the world.² In other words, I call intellectuals those groups who claim a monopoly on the right to preach, teach, and interpret the world. According to Mannheim, from the sociological perspective the decisive factor in modern times, in contrast with the situation in the Middle Ages, was the breaking of the monopoly of ecclesiastical interpretation of the world, "maintained by the sacerdotal caste, while there emerged in the place of a strata of closed and entirely organized intellectuals a free *intelligentsia*" (ibid., p.39-40). Furthermore: concomitant to the liberation of intellectuals from the rigorous organization of the Church, other forms of interpreting the world were being increasingly recognized.

Belonging to a determined group goes much beyond bonds of loyalty, obedience, and birth, principally "because we see the world and certain things in the world in the same way that the group sees them (in other words, in terms of the meanings of the group in question). Each concept, each concrete meaning, contains a crystallization of the experiences of a certain group" (ibid., p.49).

I would like to turn now to something important to me: how to interpret the struggle between the intellectuals linked to the magazine *A Ordem* and communists in the period in question? It is important to emphasize that every political conflict, as a rationalized form of struggle for social predominance, aims to weaken the social status of opponents, its public prestige, and self-confidence (ibid., p.65). Can it be denied that those involved in the magazine in question assumed as a group 'intellectual arms,' such as refuting as on the theoretical plan their opponents and equally undermining their social position? In the words of Karl Mannheim:

Only in a world in transformation, in which new fundamental values are being created and the old ones are being destroyed, can intellectual conflict reach the point where the antagonists seek to annihilate not only the specific beliefs and attitudes of each other, but equally the intellectual foundations on which these beliefs and attitudes are based. (Mannheim, 1982, p.90)

According to Mannheim, there exists among all groups of intellectuals a 'sociological connection of unification,' namely, education. In other words,

“participation in a common cultural inheritance progressively tends to suppress differences of birth, status, profession, and wealth, and unite learned individuals based on the education received” (Mannheim, 1982, p.180-181). Nevertheless, it is social groups (and not the isolated individual) who formulate the theories corresponding both to their interests and to determined situations, since in each specific situation forms of thinking and possibilities of orientation are discovered. Only to the extent that these “structurally condition collective forces continue to exist beyond the duration of an isolated historic situation, is that theories and possibilities of orientation linger” (ibid., p.200).

Aware of the moral connotation present in the term ideology, Mannheim postulates the use of the term perspective to designate the global mode of the subject conceiving things, as determined by their historical and social context (ibid., p.287-288). Another central postulate of the Sociology of Knowledge is related to the link between the orientation of certain values and meanings and a given position in the social structure (the way of seeing and the attitude conditioned by collective purposes of a group).

As Bourdieu accurately observed, the production of the representations of the social world – conceived as a fundamental dimension of politics – is a quasi-monopoly of intellectuals, since the “struggle for social classifications is a capital dimension of the class struggle and it is through this side that symbolic production intervenes in the political struggle” (Bourdieu, 2003, p.66). he also says that the intellectual is the one who holds the monopoly of production of discourse about the social world.

The concept of *field* proposed by Bourdieu allows the group of intellectuals who gravitated around the Catholic magazine *A Ordem* and the Dom Vital Center to be worked with accurately, to the extent that the conflict between clergy and communists should be seen as a struggle for supremacy in the political and intellectual fields. It should be emphasized that an author does not connect directly to society, but rather through the structure of an intellectual field, which functions as a type of mediator between the author and society. What is at play in the structure of a field, Bourdieu argues (2003, p.120), “is a state of relations of power between the agents or the institutions involved in the struggle, or if preferred, the distribution of the specific capital, which accumulated in previous struggles orientates later strategies.”

To complete the theoretical framework of Bordieu all that is left is to present the concept of *habitus*,³ understood here as the mental structures through which individuals learn their social world. *Habitus* is like a cultural matrix which predisposes individuals to make choices.⁴ This notion allows the

assessment of the propensity of a given social group to select responses from a specific cultural repertoire, in compliance with the demands of a given field or a given context. By constructing a theory of practices, the sociologist allows the possibility of rethinking the process of collective identity formation, since the concept in question emphasizes the nature of interdependence between individual and society. Roughly speaking, *habitus* should be seen as a system of (structured/structuring) dispositions acquired through learning (implicit or explicit) which functions as a system of strategy generating schemes. Like religious, artistic, or scientific *habitus*, Bourdieu asserts, political *habitus* assumes a special preparation. Nevertheless, in the first place,

all the learning necessary to acquire the *corpus* of specific knowledge (theories, problematics, concepts, historical traditions, economic data, etc.) produced and accumulated through the political work of the professionals in the present and past, or in the most general capacities such as the dominion of a certain language and certain political rhetoric, that of the *tribune*, indispensable in relations with the profane, or that of *debating*, necessary in relations among professionals. (Bourdieu, 2001, p.169-170)

In this perspective, the greater part of the actions of social agents are the product of a meeting between *habitus* ('incorporated structures') and field ('objective structures'). Put simply, *habitus*, as a structured and general set of collective representations, interiorized in individuals, is constituted in specific historical and cultural conditions, and equally in distinct social spaces, such as family, school, work, etc.

THE PLACE OF THE CATHOLIC INTELLIGENTSIA IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM

Analyzing the Brazilian intellectual field, Daniel Pécaut emphasizes that the notion of engagement obtained success, especially at the end of the 1950s, when the idea was voluntary adhesion to popular causes. In the particular context of the 1930s, Pécaut says, Brazilian intellectuals had ties with the Social Sciences, above all Sociology, which indicates both the "discourse that Brazil makes about itself" and the "position that the intellectual occupies in the process of creating the Brazilian nation" (Pécaut, 1990, p.7). He also says that from the thinkers of the 1930s, who outlined in great detail the scheme of good social organization, to those of 1955, who imagined correct development, "all thought

themselves equally persuaded that they only expressed what the social actually is, and what actually is development – being convinced that ideas directly commanded historic duty” (ibid., p.8).

One of Pécaut’s central theses lies in the affirmation that the two generations of Brazilian intellectuals, that of 1920-1940 as well as of 1954-1964, manifested the conviction that they had an essential responsibility for the process of the construction of nationality. Even with an interval of 30 years, both achieved a notable social impact and furthermore effectively contributed to impose new ‘representations of the political.’ Nevertheless, in relation to intellectuals in 1920s-1940s, specifically concerned with the problem of national identity and institutions, he proposes some nuances in the analysis:

It is true that not all intellectuals from the time shared the same political concepts. Many sympathized with the various authoritarian movements that emerged after the 1930s, or later adhered to the *Estado Novo* created in 1937. Others kept their distance from this question. The large majority, however, agreed with the rejection of representative democracy and the strengthening of the functions of the state. They also heeded the priority of national imperative and adhered, whether explicitly or not, to a hierarchical vision of social order. Despite their discordances, they converged on the demand of a status of a ruling elite, in defense of the idea that there was no other path to progress except by acting ‘on top of’ and ‘giving form’ to society. (Pécaut, 1990, p.15)

Between 1922 and 1928, Jackson de Figueiredo did not restrict the actions of the Dom Vital Center solely to an intellectual and religious base, but rather sought to imprint on it a political character (albeit a non-party one) in defense of authority, or order and nationalism. In this period, the history of the Center is confused with the political position of its founder, not to mention its very timid actions, far from reaching a large-scale public. After the death of Jackson de Figueiredo in 1928, Alceu Amoroso Lima assumed the presidency of the Center and moved away from political activism.⁵ To a great extent the reasons for the great prestige enjoyed both by the *A Ordem* magazine and the Dom Vital Center, notably in the 1935-1938 period, should be sought and even explained in light of the confluence of its objectives with the authoritarian tendencies of the political model of the Vargas administration.

Therefore, in the 1920s the Catholic elite concentrated their efforts on the struggle against the strengthening of the lay state, the advance of Protestantism, and the inertia of the Catholic group, as well as leading the Church back to the

center of national political decisions. For a large part of the ruling elite of Catholicism in Brazil it was inconceivable that in a country with a Catholic majority the Church "had forsaken the center of political decisions, occupying an obscure role in the middle of an intelligentsia increasingly based on scientificism and anticlericalism" (Gropp, 2007, p.33). It is in this sense that the magazine, prepared by Catholic intellectuals and aimed at them, placed itself as the guardian of Catholic ideas and as an instrument to fight against those identified as enemies.

The key question proposed by Cândido Rodrigues is this: to what extent did the magazine incorporate aspects of conservative ideas in its discourse? For this he draws on the thought of the Irish politician Edmund Burke (1729-1797), one of the first critics of the developments of the French Revolution:

Formulating a conception of history based on the tradition which, in turn, was founded on the principle of authority (which Burke understood as sacralized by tradition), he adopted it (authority) as a parameter for the proper functioning of society. This should inevitably be based on the true legacies of ancestors, including and fundamentally the religions considered as true, such as the inviolability of private property, principally royal and clerical, the primacy of the hereditary monarchy, the sanctity of the king and queen, etc. (Rodrigues, 2005, p.17)

In relation to this, Rodrigues emphasizes that the defense of the authority of monarchs, the papacy, and the clergy, made by Burke and other thinkers in opposition to the religious freedom and the 'Rights of Man' propounded in the French Revolution, was in line with the conservative and anti-liberal policy of the Roman Curia, adopted since the middle of the eighteenth century. In effect, the ideas opposed to the developments of the French Revolution also found a resonance in other thinkers, such as Louis-Ambroise de Bonald (1754-1840) and Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821).

In the context of the implementation of the Spanish republican regime, he highlights the leading place occupied by the Catholic philosopher and politician Juan Donoso Cortés (1808-1853), for whom Catholicism was a 'medicine' against revolution (read disorder). Actually, according to Rodrigues, these thinkers – who actively participated in the European scenario from the end of the eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth – had a decisive role in relation to questions of a politico-religious nature, "serving as reference in the period which they lived and even later, not only for the Catholic Church, but

also for thinkers and governments who, later, used their ideas in the foundations of regimes of force, arbitrary ones” (Rodrigues, 2005, p.20).

It is important to highlight that both *A Ordem* and the Dom Vital Center (1922) “emerged in a social context in which an increasingly agnostic cosmovision tends to be adopted. The struggle which the Catholic intelligentsia waged is in the sense of legitimating itself before this society, combating its political and religious errors” (Velloso, 1978, p.120-121). It should be highlighted that the article by Mônica Velloso was one of the first works to call attention for the affinities between ‘conservative’ European thought⁶ – represented by names such as Donoso Cortés, Charles Maurras, Joseph de Maistre, and Antonio Sardinha – and the discourse produced by the Catholic intelligentsia, providing a foundation for its ideological counterattack against the attacks of other ascendant social groups, which had new ‘ideologies.’

In effect, during the 1920s Brazilian intellectuals sought a re-approximation with the state, a process which deepened after the 1930 Revolution. Thus, “there was no significant split between the Brazilian state and authoritarian intellectuals,” but rather “a strong tendency of the state to coopt figures from the intellectual field of various ideological types” (Beired, 1999, p.67). In turn, the intellectuals developed strategies to enter the state apparatus, a fact which denotes a mutual correspondence of interests.

THE QUESTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY

In relation to *A Ordem*’s articles/editorials, it is interesting to note the confluence of themes dealt with by this Catholic group, notably those of a political and religious nature. However, it is intended here to explore those articles which generally speaking highlight the clash between Catholics and communists, in other words between two ‘visions of the world,’ in the political, intellectual, and even the ‘religious’ field. Karl Mannheim, one of the pioneers of the ‘sociology of intellectuals,’ was the first to demonstrate that competition controls not only economic activity through market mechanisms, the course of events of the political and social sphere, but equally, “provides the driving impulse of various interpretations of the world which, when the social foundations are discovered, are revealed as intellectual expressions of the conflicting groups fighting for power” (Mannheim, 1982, p.290).

The paper will be organized around two central thematic points: the question of private power and the organization of society. It should be clear to readers that we see the intellectuals linked to the Dom Vital Center and to *A Ordem* to be one of the principal agents – alongside ecclesiastical authorities – charged with the mission of mobilizing (in a long-lasting manner) the largest possible number of social actors gifted with the same vision of the social world. Nevertheless, in relation to the communists, the inverse reading cannot be discarded. Let me explain myself: with the purpose of guaranteeing a long-lasting mobilization, parties should “prepare and impose a representation of the social world capable of obtaining the adhesion of the greatest possible number of citizens.” Furthermore: “conquering positions (whether of power or not) capable of assuring power over his *attributaries* [sic]” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.174). In summary, the approach proposed by Pierre Bourdieu is based on supporting the following assertion: if, on the one hand, we cannot deny the specific properties of a ‘field,’ on the other we must recognize the “homologous structures” among the various ‘fields,’ such as the Church and the political parties.⁷

It was during the papacy of Leo XIII (1878-1903) that the Church began to formulate a more progressive social doctrine, especially after *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. This document marked the late acceptance of the modern world by the Church after its open fight against modernization during a good part of the nineteenth century (Mainwaring, 1989, p.43). Taking into account that the role of the Roman Pontiffs was always to “preserve the flock of the Lord against the wiles of the enemy,” Leo XIII underlined that the right of property, supported on the precepts of natural and divine law, guaranteed the tranquility of public and domestic society. Against Catholic teaching, socialists had conceived the right of property “as a human invention which was repugnant to the natural equality of men.” Proposing the “communism of goods,” their supporters declared that “it is impossible to patiently deal with poverty,” and in this way the property and privileges of the rich should be violated with impunity (Leão XIII, 1946, p.12).

In the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII emphasizes that in the wake of the socialist proposal for the suppression of private property would come the attempt to instigate among the most needy a type of envious hatred. As well as being an unjust measure, especially because it violated the legitimate rights of property owners, it contaminated the functions of the state, compromising all of the social edifice. One of the demands preached by socialism, namely, the conversion of private property into collective property, “would have no other impact than to make the situation of workers more precarious,

removing from them the free use of their wages and stealing from them, for this reason, all the hope and possibility of enlarging their assets and improving their situation” (Leão XIII, 1945, p.6).

In the same way, according to the Supreme Pontiff, the fruit of labor belongs to the laborer and the private and personal ownership of goods should be considered a natural right, in other words, an innate right of each individual. By appealing to what the Pope called the ‘providence of the state,’ socialists were going against natural justice and breaking family ties. Furthermore, in the place of such acclaimed equality, the socialist solution would result in equality of indigence and misery. Without the support of religion – “fundamental for all social laws” – and the ecclesiastical institution – “the common mother of rich and poor” – it would be impossible to find an effective solution for social conflicts. In relation to the problem of the social question, the Church’s project prescribed union between social classes, inculcating in the poor resignation and in the rich Christian charity. Exercising its authority, the state was responsible for taking care of the common good, so that by “repressing agitators, it would preserve good workers from the danger of seduction and the legitimate employers from being stripped of what was theirs” (Leão XIII, 1945, p.28).

ON THE FRONTIER BETWEEN THE POLITICAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND RELIGIOUS SPHERES

In the reading of Marx and Engels, religion is “an expression of an imperfect consciousness of the being of man: not man as an abstract individual, but as a social man, or a collective human being.”⁸ Stated in another manner, while for the former religion can be defined as the “illusory felicity of the people,” for the latter, it is the “fantastic projection of forces which obscure human existence.” In effect, this declared anti-theist posture “was converted into the habitual language of communist publications and leaders. A notable ideological attitude which had significant repercussions on the judicial system and especially on the practice of the communist method” (Cifuentes, 1989, p.111). In the Soviet Union under Stalin, the eradication of religious beliefs – seen as an “obstacle to human progress” – was the fruit of the ideology of the suppression of alienations (Rivière, 1989, p.102). Following Marxist thought, it became necessary to reduce the strong influence (negative in this case) exercised by religion on the parts of the working class who had not reached class consciousness.

Producing a type of synthesis of the socio-historical context of the inter-war period, Tristão de Ataíde⁹ raised a set of questions which indicated this effort: "Where are we?"; "Where are we going?"; "Where should we go?" (Ataíde, 1935, p.103). He believed that it was possible to define in a single phrase the condition of modern man: being at a crossroads. One of the principal anguishes which deeply worried him was generalized feeling of instability. To the extent that he moved away from the paradigm of medieval and Christian unity, "to deliver himself to the sign of liberty and of undefined and unlimited diversity, – man also lost a sense of responsibility and security" (ibid.). Ataíde believed that societies governed by "the whim of the vote, force, or money" should be regarded with reservation, since "they are always subject to the law of the unexpected and transformation" (ibid.). Some social phenomena could thus be seen as the principal factors in the desegregation of bourgeois society and its general conception of life:¹⁰ 'War,' 'Revolution,' 'Crisis,' and 'Nationalist Reaction.'

Rather than choosing between a 'catastrophic vision' and an 'idyllic vision' of social reality, Alceu Amoroso Lima preferred to move away from this dichotomy. According to him, what was fundamental was indicating the four paths which could lead to the building of a 'New Age,' "towards which everyone confusingly feels the humanity of our day is heading:" the 'liberal path' (primacy of individual liberty/predominance of the bourgeoisie); the 'socialist path' (abolition of private property/hypertrophy of the state¹¹/annihilation of the bourgeoisie/dictatorship of the proletariat); the 'national-totalitarian path' ("national and authoritarian reaction against the desegregation provoked by the excesses of liberalism and socialism"); and the 'Christian path' ("has a moral force and operates on consciences"). Having said this, the first three paths translated one of the indelible marks of the modern world: "the spirit of diversity."

Lima's thesis is that the twentieth century, after almost three decades in terms of socio-political organization, no longer housed "pure regimes,"¹² to the contrary, it was headed to the agglutination of various tendencies ("mixed regimes"). Despite having aspects of "reciprocal hostility and disorder," the three currents revealed positive traits, such as: 1) Increasing intervention of the state in social life; 2) Gradual incorporation of the economic by the political; 3) Limited remuneration due to collective needs (the capitalist economy exclusively based on the concept of profit being replaced by an economy in which the individual is subordinated to the collectivity as a part of the whole); 4) Corporate organization of society (growing importance of trade unions as

professional defense bodies and their gradual incorporation in the political organism of the state); 5) Importance of technical factors (dominion of man over nature as the fruit of material and scientific progress); 6) Social justice (assuring men a minimum in terms of the satisfactory of their individual and family necessities).

Establishing who was the enemy was as important for individuals as for the state, with the example of the sick who conferred relevance on the diagnosis of a 'obscure ailment.' After the November 1935 risings (which occurred in Natal, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro), the communists convinced "many sceptics of the imminence of a social danger which had successfully adopted the tactic of dissimulation, to mislead the unwary."¹³ At the same time, talking about 'communism' was nothing other than dealing with the 'exotic subject,' since these episodes marked the appearance of the question on the political agenda. Deepening a little his perspective of the communist phenomenon – synonym of 'social infection' –, Alceu Amoroso Lima analyzed the implications of the connections between the school space, the Party, and the state in the construction of pedagogical practices in Soviet Russia.¹⁴ What did communism prescribe for education? A principle dear to 'Soviet pedagogy' was that "all education is a means of achieving a superior purpose. In other words, teaching and education did not have in themselves their reason of being and are governed by a determined extrinsic purpose" (Lima, 1936, p.320). According to specialists, the ultimate aim of this project was "to construct the new man and give him a general vision of the universe; the short-term purpose is to prepare the paladins of socialism" (ibid.). In summary, the school functioned (through the re-education of youths, adults, and children) as a space reserved for the building of a new "philosophy of life," better said, another "vision of the world."

Once the role of the institution was defined as a political instrument at the service of communist ideals, the state assumed complete control of all educational activities. In the words of Alceu Amoroso Lima, the success of communism as a social transformation project depended both on 'elites' and 'masses.' Since this education was to be conceived for a single predetermined end, "no other authority in this question could be tolerated apart from the state, and, more than this, it was the Party which provided the state not only with its ideology, but also its human elements" (Lima, 1936, p.321-322).

To prove his honesty, Alceu Amoroso Lima states, the intellectual should not combat communism only by pointing out its fiascos. Equally analyzing its successes, he must distance himself both from the "distortion of facts" and of "value criteria." An incontestable fact was the importance given by the Soviet

state to education, especially due to the intimate alliance established between the field of politics and that of teaching practices. Furthermore, placing the school at the service of the state implied "the systematic and broad ranging preparation of new generations in a uniform direction according to a pre-established plan... completely rigorous and even militarily subordinated to the interests of the Party and the aims of the Social Revolution" (Lima, 1936, p.329). In this way, the Catholic intelligentsia was responsible for repudiating "Soviet pedagogy," since this was affiliated to the "dogmatic principles of the materialist philosophy of life and society" (ibid., p.330).

In summary, what should the posture of Catholics be towards the communist problem? What worried Alceu Amoroso Lima was the very remote possibility of reconciliation between communism and Catholicism. For him, the attitude of Catholics should be summarized as 'repulsion by conviction.' Although certain points are analogous to the two proposals for the organization of the state (such as: professional trade unions; limitation of property; planning of economic life by the state), the Church "always reserved the special rights of personality and social groups, especially the family, against all and any absorption by the state" (Lima, 1936a, p.346-347).

Calling attention to the difficulty in comprehending the communist phenomena in its totality, Alceu Amoroso Lima argues that the anti-religious elements of the Marxist-Leninist system is only one part of the doctrine. Actually, this "general philosophy of life" was, at the same time, "a philosophical, historical, political, economic, pedagogical, masonic, Jewish phenomenon, etc., and not only, or even principally, religious" (Lima, 1936a, p.348-349). Nevertheless, according to the author, dealing with it in a manner that is somewhat 'bluntly,' without taking into account its ramifications and its extensive and complex origins, could reduce it only to "an expression of the Anti-Christ or to a Jewish-Masonic campaign against the Church" (ibid., p.349), something which is not sustainable. Next, he records that Lenin erred by conjecturing about the possibility of the Russian Revolution extending its ideals in a few years to all of humanity, "some of his adversaries also erred, judging it to be a phenomenon that was merely Russian or ephemeral, which was remain where it had emerged and would only last a short while" (ibid., p.351).

Lima, a Brazilian Catholic lay person, sees communism as "the ultimate logical consequence of the most monstrous errors of the modern world, in the inversion of all values, the dehumanization of the world, and the de-Christianization of society" (Lima, 1936a, p.353). Seen as the direct heir of 'individualism,' communism had found a shelter in the intellectual field thanks to the

“terrible sequence of errors which since the Middle Ages had led man to repudiate God” (ibid.). According to Alceu Amoroso Lima, it is in the “terrain of principles,” fundamentally that the combat had to be concentrated, since the communist ideology “channeled to itself all the small or large anti-Christian or anti-spiritual current which humanity has let proliferate in its breast...” (ibid.).

In the section ‘Register,’ the journalist Perilo Gomes presented a report about what was offered to workers in the Soviet Union. According to Gomes, all workers who wanted to obtain a job enlisted through an official government agency, responsible for this area. Of those indicated to a position only one would be chosen; who would undergo a period of 15 days experience, “without other pay than the ‘bread card,’ in other words an authorization to receive a certain quantity of bread for free” (Gomes, 1935, p.245). If he corresponded to the expectations of his employer the worker would be obliged to accept the pay established in the official table, whose value was lower than the cost of living. Refused twice by the employer, the worker would lose the right to enjoy the ‘bread card,’ being evicted from his dwelling, which would lead to penury. The loss of assistance provided by the agency would also lead the individual to another drastic consequence: being considered as dead. In short, his name would not even appear on the list of unemployed. For Perilo Gomes, the Russian government used this trick to reduce the numbers of those ‘without work’ and simultaneously maintain unblemished the reputation of the communist regime.¹⁵

The report of the French Jesuit bishop Miguel d’Herbigny – president of the Pro-Russia Commission and honorary president of the Pontifical Oriental Institute – on the religious persecutions carried out by the Bolsheviks also endorsed the thesis that the state had acquired increasingly ‘totalitarian’ traits, to the extent that it concentrated absolute power capable of monitoring any activity carried out by citizens. In turn, it also highlighted the attempt of the Soviet communists to suppress religion and religiosity of individuals or groups through the socialization of the constitutional order, favoring the creation of a new loyalty to the state (Rivière, 1989, p.22). In a mission at the service of the Holy See,¹⁶ the prelate found that more than 90 percent of the Russian population was composed of peasants and less than 10 percent of urban residents.

In the vision of those in charge of the magazine, socialism had as its principal attraction the promise of the ‘Earthly Paradise,’ granting material happiness to its supporters and to the “millions of misfortunates which liberalism produced, the plutocracy sustains, misery revolts, and irreligion incites,” while

since it "corresponds to this great promise of the universal vengeance of the oppressed against the oppressor, the new destructive force of the current social system has been gaining social force."¹⁷ According to Luiz Sucupira, the horror which socialists had of private property was generally speaking closely linked to how Marx had appropriated the intellectual inventions of others, such as the theory of surplus value attributed to Proudhon.¹⁸

In his analysis, Luiz Sucupira argues that in the socialist movement, in addition to the components of 'prophetism' and 'messianism,' a type of twisted plagiarism of the Gospels, since for Marx and Engels, "humanity was heading to an absolutely free future, without oppression, without inequities, without class divisions, without national antagonisms, without government despotisms, without distinctions of race, without social compressions," (Sucupira, 1937, p.614). In turn, communism had as an underlying promise perfect happiness, in other word the 'earthly paradise,' while the 'old man' of the past was transformed into the 'new man' of tomorrow, the conductor of his history.¹⁹

Taking into account that socialism denied freedom of conscience, the adepts of this new 'church' were like 'serfs' subservient to the dictates of its leaders. According to Sucupira, the cult of Lenin, for example, pushed itself as a vital necessity for the individual. At the limit, those who refused to pay reverence to the 'communist messiah' incurred the risk of losing their employment and even the bread distributed by the state.²⁰

The reports of travelers who had *in loco* Soviet experience became one of the most important sources for the Catholic group. In the book *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, the observations of the French writer André Gide (1869-1951) call attention:

I doubt that in any other country, even in the Germany of Hitler, was the spirit less free, more curved, more fearful (and terrorized), more enslaved.... In the USSR it must be admitted now and once and for all, in relation to everything and whatever, there could not be more than one opinion. Every morning *Pravda* taught what should be known, what should be thought, and what should be believed.²¹

Another relevant testimony was given by the US writer Max Eastman (1883-1969), a former professor of Philosophy of Columbia University (New York) and editor of the journal *Masses*. A socialist activist, Eastman had stated that the Bolshevik regime had thrown away any remnants of libertarian ideas, undermining the hope of the construction of a classless society. According to

the transcription of his report, the Soviet Union was marked by the “concentration of political power and privileges in the hands of a bureaucratic caste, who supported a more ruthless autocrat than the Czars. This bureaucracy is still called the Communist Party.”²² For the Catholic intelligentsia, these and other statements, such as the former US activist and worker, Andrew Smith, entitled “I was a worker in the USSR,” proved the thesis that Russia was still far from becoming the long dreamed of ‘paradise’ of the working classes.

The Ukrainian philosopher Nicolai Berdiaev (1874-1948) became one of the most important theoretical references for the Catholic *intelligentsia* in the discussion involving the tenuous line which separated communism from religious beliefs. According to Berdiaev, the hostility demonstrated by Russian Communism towards all religion was not the fruit of chance, but a fundamental part of its ‘concept of the world.’ The edification of communist ideas, Berdiaev stated, was characterized by “extreme statism, in which total, absolute power demanded the obligatory unification of thought” (Berdiaev, 1939, p.201-202).

The opposition to all types of religion came from the fact that communism aimed to replace Christianity, both by responding to the religious aspirations of the human soul and giving a meaning to life. From this perspective conflict with other religious doctrines was inevitable, since the components of intolerance and fanaticism belonged to the universe of communist belief. According to Marxist thought, for the working class to achieve its emancipation it would be necessary to “tear all religious feeling from the heart.” At the limit, “the Church should be separated from social life, buried in the enclosure of conscience, to seek through a policy of progressive extinction, its total destruction” (Cifuentes, 1989, p.112). According to Berdiaev, the true and full communist could never be a religious believer or Christian. Since there is imposed on him “a concept of the world defined beforehand, he has to be materialist and atheist, a militant atheist. It is not enough to share the social program of communism to become a member of the party. It is necessary to accept this faith, in opposition to the Christian faith, in which communism essentially resides” (Berdiaev, 1939, p.211).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is worth noting that although the idealization of the Soviet Union did not accompany the realities of Soviet socialism, this process “fed the imagination of the building of this new world.” In this aspect, like the Catholic Church

– personified by Rome –, communism in the twentieth century was characterized by its universal dimension and by the unity of its organization. However, it has to be highlighted that the analogy in question had its limits, since while the Catholic Church tried to administer, with greater or lesser success, the diversity of religious experiences (the multiplicity of groups which composed it, the heterogeneity of positions adopted), the international communist system only managed to survive by progressively closing itself, frequently eliminating all open and implicit contestation, whether veiled or potential. In the countries where communist parties held political power, for example, “a repressive police apparatus was developed, using all forms of physical violence (internment camps arbitrary arrests, murders, torture, forced confessions, etc.), on a scale without precedent” (Dreyfus, 2004, p.14-15).

Nevertheless, reactionary rhetoric and anticommunism, present throughout the Western world, contributed to associate Stalinism and Nazism (single party, single ideology, desire to annihilate civil society, exercise of power through terror) and, equally, to affirm a comparative tendency in recent studies of communism.²³ However, what calls attention in this debate is the absence of any attempt to underline what distinguishes communism from fascist and democratic regimes, namely, “the utopia of political power effectively exercised by the lower classes, by the more numerous groups of society, by the groups with less material and cultural resources” (Dreyfus, 2004, p.16). Finally, historians must not neglect other dimensions of the communist phenomena (national and international, political and social, emancipatory and repressive), reducing the history of communism – through value judgements and political prejudice – to a ‘criminal adventure’ and/or a conspiracy of agents and spies at the service of Moscow.

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NOTES

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² According to Mannheim, "the magicians, the Brahmins, and the medieval clergy have to be seen as intellectual strata, each one enjoying in their society a monopolistic control over the formation of a vision of the world in this society..." (1982, p.38).

³ In relation to the theoretical applicability of the concept of *habitus* see SETTON, 2002.

⁴ "*Habitus* are the principal generators of distinct and distinctive practices – what the worker eats, the sport he practices and the way he practices it, his political opinions and how he expresses them differs systematically from the corresponding consumption or activities of industrial entrepreneurs; but they are also classification schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and of the division of different tastes. They establish the differences between what is good and bad, between what is distinctive and what is vulgar etc., but they are not the same. So, for example, the same behavior or the same good can appear distinctive for someone pretentious, or ostentatious for another, and vulgar for a third person" (BOURDIEU, 2008, p.22).

⁵ "In the 1930s, branches of the Dom Vital Center were created in other states, but the Rio de Janeiro cell remained the principal radiating center of Catholic doctrine which had the greatest growth, counting on more than 500 members in this period. Previously informal

meetings gave way to courses and talks, attracting an ever more numerous public, composed of intellectuals, professionals, teachers, politicians, businessmen, even not formally linked to the institution. Important people of the time, such as Osvaldo Aranha, Pedro Calmon, Afrânio Peixoto, Tasso da Silveira, Murillo Mendes and Jacques Maritain were invited to give talks and participate in conferences” (GROPPO, 2007, p.30).

⁶ According to Hannah Arendt, conservatism “as a political creed and as an ideal owes its existence to a reaction to the French Revolution, and it is significant only in relation to History in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” ARENDT, 1990, p.35-36.

⁷ “In effect, the same way that the Church consecrated for itself the mission of spreading its grace as an institution for all believers, just or unjust, and of subjecting sinners without distinction to divine commands, the party also chooses as its aim bringing to its cause the highest possible number of the discontent (it is always the case that during election the Communist Party directs itself to ‘all progressive republicans’), not hesitating to expand its base and to attract clientele from competing parties, compromising the ‘purity’ of its line and taking advantage in a more or less conscious manner of the ambiguities of its program” (BOURDIEU, 2001, p.184).

⁸ See, in relation to this, the entry ‘religion’ in BOTTOMORE, 1996, p.316.

⁹ In 1919, when invited to write the literary criticism of the new press body entitled *O Jornal*, Alceu Amoroso Lima adopted the pseudonym “to hide his identity, since at that time there existed prejudices making the exercise of industrial activities incompatible with intellectual practices” (BELOCH, 1983, p.1829).

¹⁰ “The French Revolution marked the political beginning of the bourgeois era, as the English Industrial revolution marked its economic beginning. Each was based on the individual, having the ideal of absolute liberty, characterized by the dominium of the white race, the industrialization of the West, the colonization of the still unknown universe, by the religion of science, and by the decadence of the prestige of religion, by purely aesthetic art, by the cult of culture, by travel for pleasure, by the sexual freedom of man, generalized urbanism, the triumph of open and free economies, universities in which everything is taught without a hierarchy of values, feminism, etc. This, very deliberately accumulated without a glimpse of guidance, some patent traits of this age in which we were educated and in which we generally still live” (ATAÍDE, 1935, p.104).

¹¹ It should be emphasized that for Alceu Amoroso Lima this element was the principal factor responsible for putting at risk the integrity of the rights of the human person, the family, and other social institutions.

¹² “In the regime it will manage to impose itself on all peoples and all continents, as the monarchy imposed itself in time on Europe, or as the democratic republics imposed themselves on America” (ATAÍDE, 1935, p.108).

¹³ LIMA, 1936, p.318. The article in question is the result of various talks about the directives of National Education, promoted by the then minister of Education and Public Health, Gustavo Capanema.

¹⁴ In 1921 a decree was published in Russia "prohibiting all types of religious education to people younger than 18. A short while later, a law was passed in which the prohibition was extended to people of all ages. 1934 – a new statute was published for secondary schools, which stipulated the following: 'Primary and secondary schools should assure the anti-religious education of students and concern themselves that instruction and school works have as a foundation an active fight against religion and its influence'" (CIFUENTES, 1989, p.113).

¹⁵ Since the first months of the regime, according to the historian Nicholas Werth, particularly during the Winter of 1918-1919, working class resistance was broken by the 'weapon of hunger,' since 'ration cards' were no longer respected. Therefore, to "obtain cards which gave the right to 250 grams of bread per day, and to regain work after the general closure of factories, workers were forced to sign an employment petition stipulating which stipulated that every interruption of production would from then on be considered desertion subject to the death penalty..." (COURTOIS, 2005, p.109).

¹⁶ At the beginning of the pontificate of Pius XI, the Pope "made an effort in vain to finish with the persecution of Christians in Russia. His performance, through the intermediation of the French Jesuit Bishop Miguel d'Herbigny, to consecrate bishops in secret was counterproductive. Bishop d'Herbigny was expelled from the country, and the bishops he consecrated were sent to penal colonies" (McBRIEN, 2000, p.367).

¹⁷ SUCUPIRA, 1937, p.605-606. The author of the article was a deputy and member of the Catholic group in the preparation and consolidation of the social legislation in the 1934 Constitution .

¹⁸ "The originality of Marx is only in knowing how to take advantage of these ideas already exposed and discussed for the purposes of constructing with them a system of government which, leaving the period of utopias and Platonisms, gave way to a socialist workers movements of struggle against capitalism" (SUCUPIRA, 1937, p.606-607).

¹⁹ "Adhering to communism thereby implied the radical alteration of the ontological statute of the individual – thus the advertences and the warnings to those who were animated to participate in the revolutionary movement. Similar to the old rites of passage, also present in closer epochs in secret societies, the novate experimented the symbolic ritual of death and resurrection. Being communist, they said, signified abandoning forever a life of certainties, fragmented, incoherent and passively led by events of an unintelligible reality to have absolute dominion over their own beings and the free the peoples from economic slavery, political oppression, and misery" (FERREIRA, 2002, p.68).

²⁰ "Theoretically citizens were classified among the five categories from 'stomachs,' the manual workers and soldiers of the Red Army to the 'idle' – the category in which entered intellectuals, particularly badly situated –, with 'decreasing' 'class rations.' In reality the system was more complex and unjust. Attended last, the most disfavored – 'idle,' intellectuals and 'aristocrats' – often received nothing. In relation to 'workers,' they were actually divided into various categories, according to the hierarchies of priorities which privileged vital sectors for the survival of the regime ... In the centralized system of supply implemen-

ted by the Bolsheviks, the food weapon had great importance in the stimulation of this or that category of citizens” (COURTOIS, 2005, p.111).

²¹ GIDE, 1936, apud SÁ, 1937, p.550. It is important to note that *Pravda* was a newspaper of the Soviet Union and the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (1918-1991).

²² Paulo Sá does not precisely indicate in which texts it is possible to find the reports of Max Eastman about his trip to Russia. Nevertheless, according to Eastman, he traveled to the country for the first time in September 1922, returning to the United States only in 1927 (due to his travels through Eastern Europe, where he finished the book *Marx and Lenin, The Science of Revolution*, published in London in 1926). Cf. EASTMAN, 1955.

²³ “This tendency is not new and is affiliated, at least partially, to the theory of totalitarianism, whether to demand or to reject it. The principal interest of this type of analysis is probably to take part of the methodological advances in the dominion of studies of Nazism, to the benefit of studies about communism” (DREYFUS, 2004, p.27-28).