



The Church In the Shadows

CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA

No. 12

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IN LITHUANIA**

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*Translation of Authentic First-Hand Reports
from Soviet-Occupied Lithuania*

Published by

**The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests' League of America
64-09 56th Road, Maspeth
New York 11378**

United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

In 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania by force, 85.5% of the country's more than 3 million inhabitants were Roman Catholic, 4.5% Protestant, 7.3% Jewish, 2.5% Orthodox, and 0.2% of other persuasions.

In the two archdioceses and four dioceses were: 708 churches, 314 chapels, 73 monasteries, 85 convents, three archbishops, nine bishops, 1271 diocesan priests, 580 monks, of whom 168 were priests. Four seminaries had 470 students. There were 950 nuns.

Nuns cared for 35 kindergartens, 10 orphanages, 25 homes for the aged, two hospitals, a youth center, and an institute for the deaf-mute.

There were 18 Catholic primary schools and the same number of Catholic high schools. Religion was taught in all public schools.

Catholic organizations numbered about 800,000 members. In 1935, there were 28 Catholic magazines and newspapers, with a total circulation of 7,000,000.

On June 15, 1940, the Red Army marched into Lithuania; the independent government was replaced by a puppet regime.

On July 14-15, rigged elections were staged. On July 21, with the Red Army surrounding the assembly house, the new People's Diet "unanimously" declared Lithuania a Soviet Socialist Republic.

On June 25, 1940, the Church was declared separate from the state, and the representative of the Holy See was expelled.

Parish lands were confiscated, clergy salaries and pensions were cut off, and their savings confiscated. Churches were deprived of support. Catholic printing plants were confiscated, and religious books destroyed.

On June 28, 1940, the teaching of religion and recitation of prayers in schools was forbidden. The University's Department of Theology and Philosophy was abolished, and all private schools were nationalized. The seminaries at Vilkaviškis and Telšiai were closed, and the seminary at Kaunas was permitted to operate on a very limited scale. The clergy were spied upon constantly.

On June 15, 1941, 34,260 Lithuanians were packed off in cattle-cars to undisclosed points in the Soviet Union. After World War II, the mass deportations resumed and continued until 1953.

Vincentas Borisevičius, Bishop of Telšiai, was arrested on February 3, 1946, and condemned to death after a secret trial. Before year's end, his auxiliary, Bishop Pranas Ramanauskas, was also arrested and deported to Siberia. Bishop Teofilius Matulionis of Kaišiadorys and Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys of Vilnius were deported to a Siberian labor camp. Archbishop Reinys perished in prison at Vladimir, November 8, 1953. By 1947, Lithuania was left with a single bishop, Kazimieras Paltarokas, of Panevėžys. He died in 1958.

In 1947, the last convents and monasteries were closed, their communities dispersed, and all monastic institutions were outlawed.

After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a slight improvement in the religious situation. Bishops Matulionis and Ramanauskas were allowed to return to Lithuania, but not to minister to their dioceses or to communicate with the clergy or laity.

Bishop Ramanauskas died in 1959, and Archbishop Matulionis in 1963.

In 1955, two new bishops were appointed by Rome and consecrated: Julijonas Steponavičius and Petras Maželis. Steponavičius has never been permitted to administer his diocese.

Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, consecrated in 1957, is also under severe government restrictions. In 1965, Monsignor Juozas Labukas-Matulaitis was consecrated in Rome to head the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis.

Relaxation of pressure on religious believers soon revealed that the Lithuanian people were still deeply religious. It was decided in the mid-fifties to resume the attack. The principal means of attack would be unlimited moral pressure, since physical terror seemed only to strengthen and unify the faithful.

In 1972, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, clandestinely published in that country, began to reach the free world at irregular intervals. Primarily intended to keep Catholics in Lithuania informed of the situation of the Church there, these Lithuanian *samizdat* also serve as a constant appeal to the free world not to forget the plight of a people struggling against overwhelming odds to defend their religious beliefs and to regain their basic human rights.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Vice President
Lithuanian Roman Catholic
Priests' League of America

On March 19, 1972, the first issue of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* very hesitantly made its appearance, with no way of estimating how much interest it would meet with at home or abroad. The atheistic government accused it of wrong-doing and by massive searches and arrests tried to stifle it.

But the government was unsuccessful. State security officials, realizing that they would hardly be able to destroy the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* by such tactics, resorted to "more subtle means: an attempt to compromise it and its publishers.

The priests and faithful of Lithuania know how the security people force some priests to speak against the *Chronicle*. Not long ago it became known that government officials even went to Bishop Matulaitis-Labukas, demanding that he condemn the *Chronicle* in a public letter.

The bishop refused, on the basis that such an action would only compromise the Ordinaries of Lithuania in the eyes of the faithful, as had happened when they condemned the memorandum of the 17,000. (Jan. 1972: See *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* No. 2.)

At the beginning of September, Bishop Labukas and other Ordinaries of the Catholic Church in Lithuania received an anonymous communication, signed in the name of "a group of priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis".

The letter condemned "reactionary" priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis and demanded that Bishop Labukas, visiting the Vatican, denounce from there those who "try to turn back the wheel of history."

The priests of Lithuania believe that Bishop Labukas could be coerced by security organs to take this anonymous communication to the Vatican, as evidence of what "zealous" priests think about the present situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

Since the anonymous statement is the subject of wide discussion among priests and laity, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* would like to acquaint its readers not only with the anonymous statement, but also with two replies which priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis and of Vilnius wrote. Their names are well known to the *Chronicle*.

The Anonymous Statement

**To: His Excellency Bishop Juozas Matulaitis-Labukas,
Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Kaunas
and of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis.**

**Copies to: His Excellency, Bishop Juozapas Pletkus; His Excellency,
Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas; His Excellency, Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis; Monsignor Česlovas Krivaitis and Canon Juozapas Andrikonis.¹**

The onlybegotten Son of God was sent by his Father to earth, so that redeeming by his Incarnation the entire human race, he might renew it and unite it. And before offering himself on the cross, he prayed to the Father for the faithful, "that they may all be one" (Jn. 17:21). He gave his disciples a new commandment of love for one another, so that the believers might grow together into one Body. If this is true of the faithful, how much more is it true of priests, the builders of that Body of Christ.

Today that unity among priests is especially lacking. Your Excellency knows well the attitudes of the priests in the dioceses you rule. You are well enough aware especially of the actions of some reactionary priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis, which contrary to the will of Christ, tear down his Church rather than build it up.

They calumniate and smear in the eyes of the faithful many zealous workers in the vineyard of Christ, not excluding even the Ordinaries themselves, who according to' the mind of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and of recent popes, are zealously working in the present circumstances of life, which, it is true, do not tend to spoil any one.

It is no secret that the conditions of our religious life and work are not easy, but within their confines it is possible to work successfully for the good of the Church and salvation of souls.

In the Decrees of Vatican II, much is said about the relationships of priests among themselves, about their duty to create the Body of Christ. "This requires, especially in our time, many new forms of adaptation, especially in our times" (Decree on ministry and life of the Priest).

Thanks to energetic priests who understand the spirit of the times, the churches of Kauno Naujamiestis, Pajevoniai, Šakiai and

others, have been resurrected from the ruins. In many places temporary houses of worship have been erected, as in Kapčiamiestis, Bartininkai, Pilviškiai, and elsewhere, and many churches have been recently restored in all their splendor.

It can be said without hesitation that today the churches of our diocese are being restored, decorated and beautified on a much wider scale than in pre-war years. And who did all this? Was it those who consider themselves and are even called by Vatican Radio "noble Lithuanians"? No! It was mostly those who are considered by the reactionary priests to be tools of the atheists for the purpose of wrecking the Catholic Faith and the Church in Lithuania.

A strange paradox! The atheists' tools are restoring and decorating churches when they should be wrecking and ignoring them, while the so-called "priest patriots", "fighters for the freedom of the Church and religion" try in every way to turn back the wheel of history, thirsting only for vain publicity on foreign radio and in their press, and to become uncrowned martyrs, in order to satisfy their boundless selflove and thirst for praise.

Everyone knows the old adage, "Divide and conquer". It would not be so frustrating if this division were caused by the atheists, but how can we justify our own splitting up among ourselves? Is this not pouring water on another's millwheel?

Your Excellency knows well that local government organs in some regions are beginning to rescind permission to restore churches; they refuse to assign the necessary materials, and in some places they are beginning to restrict the attendance of priests at religious observances, etc.

Is this not a just reaction of the Soviet government against chauvinistic propaganda carried on by some reactionary priests? Why do the bishops of our Curia and the administrators of dioceses not react to this? Is such an attitude good for the Church?

The seminary administration complains that candidates are lacking for the first year class, that this year there was a more careful screening (By government agents — Transl. Note). Could the problem here have been caused by the so-called secret seminary, for which reactionary priests try to recruit their own candidates?

Finally, Your Excellency knows well how much these secretly ordained priests are worth, and how useful they are. A priest carries

out the duties of his calling fully and is useful to the Church (*sic* — Transl.) only when he is working in the church (*sic*), and not rooting about beneath its foundations.

Your Excellency! We know well your many years of experience in chancery work, and we are no less acquainted with your practical views on life and on contemporary trends in society; we know that you are able to call a spade a spade, but we would also want you to remain objective in evaluating the present situation which has arisen in the Diocese of Vilkaviškis.

Pope John XXIII expressed the thought that we should not look for that which divides us, but for that which is common to us all and unites us. We should like Your Excellency to look into the future through the eyes of this great pope of our times, and as much as you can, to put an end to these divisions having nothing in common with the spirit of Christ, and to the unfounded calumnies of those who bear upon their own shoulders the "burden of the day's heat" (Mt. 20, 12). We would wish that your pastoral words would help make a reality those words in the prayer of Jesus: That all may be one (Jn. 17, 21).

Before long, Your Excellency will be visiting the Vatican. We should like to hear from you while you are there, as our shepherd, the truth about our diocese and its priests, since, if you keep silent, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* will speak for you, which represents neither the Catholic Church of Lithuania, nor our diocese.

September 1, 1974

A Group of Priests of the
Diocese of Vilkaviškis

A Response to the Letter Written September 1, 1974, to the Bishops and Diocesan Administrators of Lithuania and Signed, "A Group of Priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis"

These days there is being circulated in the Diocese of Kaišiadorys an anonymous letter addressed to Bishop Matulaitis-Labukas in the name of a group of priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis. Copies were sent to Bishops Pletkus, Pavilonis, Krikščiūnas, Monsignor Krivaitis, and Canon Andrikonis.

The political content of the letter is disguised by quotations from Sacred Scripture, mixed with contemporary atheistic terminolo-

gy: "reactionary priests", "turning back the wheel of history", "just reaction of the Soviet government", "padpolshchik priests". The letter was most likely inspired, and perhaps even written by the atheists.

The question arises: Why do they, who claim to defend the Church, not dare to sign? For such a letter they would receive only praise from the atheistic government! The priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis have more than once written to Bishop Labukas on matters vital to the Church, and they had the nerve to sign, even though they expected, as a result, punishment from the atheistic government.

And so it came to pass. Father Vaclovas Degutis was removed as Dean of Lazdijai, and from his pastorate, and pushed off into a corner, while his associate, Father Gvidonas Dovidaitis to this day is despised by the government.

The authors of the anonymous document are pained by the lack of unity among priests, but they do not make it clear why they seek unity among priests—to build up the Church or to destroy it?

Or perhaps the authors are worried because in the not-too-distant past, the priests of Lithuania did not in a united fashion condemn the activities of Pope Pius XII, and only a few priests showed up who "adapted to the conditions of the times".

Who are these "reactionary priests" of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis? From the contents of the letter it is apparent that there are not many of them, they do not rebuild churches, they calumniate zealous priests, and seek publicity in the foreign press to become uncrowned martyrs.

The anonymous group, if it had the least bit of conscience and civic courage, would present the facts: Who, when, and how did the "reactionaries calumniate zealous priests?

We are convinced that Father Antanas Šeškevičius, Prosperas Bubnys, and Juozas Zdebskis showed up in the pages of the foreign press because they did their duty zealously, and without heeding the prohibitions of the government, taught children the catechism.

The authors of the letter should also know the names of other priests who have been repressed.

The authors of the anonymous letter, wishing to mislead world opinion, distracting it from the persecution of the Church, speak about current church renovation in Lithuania.

As a matter of fact, the priests of Lithuania, having trod the path

to Golgotha in their homeland and in Siberia, pay great heed to church renovation, since all other fields of endeavor: work in school, the press, catechization, etc. are restricted or completely forbidden.

Between 1955 and 1957, the government had assigned small quantities of building materials for church repairs. Later, church renovation depended completely upon the shrewdness of the pastor. The atheistic government not only failed to help, but in every conceivable way interfered—not giving permission to repair in one place, and elsewhere even closing churches; for example, in Klaipėda, Kaunas, Žagarė, Pašilė, and elsewhere.

Priests working in the Diocese of Vilkaviškis have never heard zealous renovators and rebuilders of churches in Šakiai, Pajevonys, or elsewhere called tools of the atheists. This is a product of the anonymous author's fancy.

Can the priest with faith, knowing the present circumstances, accuse zealously laboring priests of the wish "to turn back the wheel of history"? That is atheistic talk. The authors of the anonymous communication, knowing the old principle "*Divide et impera*" — "Divide and conquer", should make the appropriate deductions.

It is regrettable that in the letter, the problem of the seminary is treated superficially. Some candidates, for example, Father Juozas Čepėnas, the assistant priest of Raseiniai, waited ten years to be accepted. Vytautas Merkys, a seminarian in the fourth year of theology, was expelled from the seminary with the assistance of militia officials. At that time the authors of the anonymous document kept silent. The term, "reactionary priests" was less often used than it is today. Who then, at that time, "served the bear", so that the seminary was under such pressure? One must not forget that after the "reactionary priests" began to fight for the rights of the seminary, the government allowed double the number of candidates to enroll.

The communication mentions a secret seminary. Up till now only security agents mentioned it, during interrogations.

We are convinced that a hungry man has the right to bread. If the official seminary, forced into a strict government mold, does not satisfy the needs of the faithful—16 priests have died this year, while only eight students finished the seminary—then priests must be prepared underground. There is one thing to fear: that history might blame the priests of Lithuania for being too late.

When the atheists abolish all restrictions on the official seminary, the underground seminaries will lose their reason for existence. Today the Catholic Church in Lithuania desperately needs priests and this problem should be the concern of all: bishops, priests, and the faithful.

The authors of the anonymous letter are annoyed by the idea of underground priests. Did they go underground of their own free will? Up till 1944, there were no underground priests in Lithuania. Where and when do the underground priests "root around under the foundations of the Church"? Can the way these priests come to the assistance of the diminishing numbers of priests be characterized as rooting around the foundations of the Church? How then are we to understand the Decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Lay Apostolate, if the pastoral work of repressed priests is considered as wrecking the Church? We are deeply convinced that the underground priests can be examples of faith, courage and self-sacrifice for many.

We would like to remind the "zealous defenders of unity among priests" of the recent past of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. In 1946 a group of priests in Lvov called a notorious "synod", which decided to join the Greek-Catholic Church of Ukraine to the Russian Orthodox Church. According to Canon Law, only bishops can call a Synod. In this "Synod" of Lvov the bishops took no part, nor did they ratify its decisions.

Precisely because of this "synod", 5 million Ukrainian Catholics have not one officially operating church, while all the bishops and hundreds of priests have gone underground, and a large portion of them have become uncrowned martyrs.

It appears that the anonymous group could lightheartedly, if the atheists so wished, characterize as *podpolsciks*, burrowing under the foundations of the Church, all the apostles and other Christians of the early ages.

In the letter it is said that "reactionary priests" calumniate and even instruct the bishops, while the anonymous individuals themselves demand that Bishop Labukas be "specific", that he speak over Vatican Radio, and they accuse the chanceries of not reacting to "the chauvinistic policy of reactionary priests".

The difference between the one and the other is simply that the one group, when writing petitions concerning the most serious prob-

lems of the Church, add their signatures, while the other, seeking some vague unity, remains anonymous.

The anonymous group is very dissatisfied that the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* is broadcast over Radio Vatican. It must be remembered that the facts will always speak; when they cease, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, having become unnecessary, will fall silent.

In the letter mentioned above, the atheists in Lithuania tried to deal the Church a blow at the hands of the clergy themselves, to misinform world public opinion and the Apostolic See, to compromise the priests in the eyes of the faithful, and psychologically to disarm the young clergy and seminarians.

It remains only to cite the words of St. Peter: "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Priests of Vilkaviškis

September 25, 1974

Response to the Anonymous Statement

To: His Excellency Bishop J. Matulaitis-Labukas.

Copies to: all bishops and administrators of dioceses in Lithuania.

Your Excellency:

Not long ago you received an anonymous letter from a "group" of priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis. The author or authors did not dare to sign, even though there is no danger threatening them as a result of that letter, either from church or from civil authorities.

The allegations made and the questions raised in that letter are posed in a not altogether true light; therefore justice would require one to examine the other side of the question—"audiatur et altera pars".

The anonymous letter speaks of some priests' activities "tearing down the Church rather than building it up", and it speaks about their calumnious activities. It is regrettable that this allegation is not supported by facts: What activities "tear down the Church", and by what calumnies are confreres and bishops besmirched?

As for the letter allegation, one must note that public acts are always publicly evaluated, but not every evaluation is of itself a calumny.

The letter rejoices over restored and renovated and generally well-kept churches and states that all this is due completely to those priests who are considered the atheists' tools. This is a bit of over-statement. Were churches not renovated also by those whom the anonymous letter calls "reactionary"?

The repairing of masonry or wooden churches does not constitute all of a priest's work: Much more important than this construction of lifeless church buildings is the building up of "the living Church": catechism, sermons, and work with people in general. Unfortunately, some forget this latter element.

The anonymous letter speaks of priests who are trying to turn back the wheel of history, desiring only vain publicity... to satisfy their boundless self-love and thirst for praise." We do not know what the author has in mind here—by what actions they seek to publicize themselves and to satisfy their thirst for praise. Perhaps by catechizing children? But that is the command of Christ: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28, 19); "Let the little children come to me." (Mt. 19, 14)

That is also the law of the Church: Paragraph 1329 of the Code of Canon Law considers the teaching of religion to children one of the most serious of a priest's duties.

Can a priest's conscience be clear if he does not fulfill this duty? Who can excuse him from this duty? The civil government? But "we must obey God rather than man." (Acts 5, 29) Can we call vain seekers of praise those who wish to be faithful to the commandments of Christ and the Church, and who heed the voice of their priestly conscience?

It is sad and painful indeed that there are priests who abandon this duty: They do not work with youth, sometimes they even allow children to the sacraments without checking their grasp of religious truths. Is that perhaps the "fulfillment of the duties of state"?

Did the apostles, on whose feast-days we wear the red chasuble to signify the blood of martyrdom, thirst for vain praise, or seek to satisfy a boundless love of self"? Did those who said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge" (Acts 4, 19), wish to "turn the wheel of history back"?

They wished only to be faithful to Christ—all else was unimportant to them. We wonder whether it is honorable to impute all sorts of unworthy motives to those priests who, for teaching catechism to children, are punished by fine or sent to prison?

The anonymous letter writes that the actions of some priests are opposed to the will of Christ. They do not build up the Church of Christ, but tear it down. It is too bad that they do not specify what kind of actions. Would it be catechizing?

The anonymous communication mentions that the organs of civil government lately are stricter with the Church. It would be interesting to know when they were less strict, unless it was during the war. After all, the goals of the atheists have not changed.

According to the anonymous letter, the seminary administration is complaining about a lack of candidates, saying that this year there has been a more careful screening of applicants.

Is it reactionary priests who are to blame for this, with their "serving of the bear", as the anonymous letter states? How can there not be a shortage of applicants, if for a quarter of a century the entrance of applicants into the seminary has been restricted! It would be interesting to know when the civil government did not carry out a "careful screening of applicants".

The anonymous statement trumpets "a secret seminary". At the present time, this is just talk. But even if it were true, what would be wrong with it? To be concerned for vocations is everyone's duty. Why do the Ordinaries speak in one of their letters about "Good Shepherd Sunday"? Why did Christ say, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few..."? (Mt. 9, 37)

Finally, there would be no talk about a "secret seminary" if the civil government allowed all who wish to enroll in the seminary.

The anonymous letter speaks sarcastically about "priests secretly ordained by someone". Who is that "someone"? The bishops? A disrespectful reference to the bishops casts aspersions on priestly honor and betrays an unchurchmanlike spirit: This is the speech of a deserter, not of a soldier...

Stones are cast at "underground" priests. Would there be any, if the civil government did not interfere with their work? Do these priests not fulfill their duties better, do they not show more idealism and self-sacrifice than many who work officially and publicly?

Is not meanness of spirit betrayed by such a negative attitude towards confreres who unafraid of danger, having spent their energies and health in a forty-eight hour work week, find the energy in themselves to give their limited leisure time to pastoral work?

How many of us working officially show such idealism, dedication and love of souls as these "priest workers"?

Finally, in the history of the Church such a practice is not a first. When priests were not allowed to work freely in England, they used to study on the continent and then travel in secret to the British Isles, where imprisonment and death awaited them. Priests have similarly operated in Mexico, China and elsewhere during times of religious persecution.

* * *

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 10 carried the statement of Engineer Mindaugas Tamonis, Doctoral Candidate in technical sciences, in which he refused to restore the monument to the Red Army erected on the Hill of Crosses (*Kryžkalnis*). Tamonis' demand that a monument be erected to the victims of the cult of Stalin, and his refusal to accept the annexation of Lithuania to the USSR by force so bothered high government officials, that they launched an unusual venture.

At work, Tamonis was accused by administration officials of condoning the junta in Chile.

"I do not condone the junta in Chile, because their conduct contradicts Christian ethics," explained Tamonis.

"Then you are a Christian?"

"Yes."

"A Believer?"

"Yes."

It was suggested that he find other work, since he would not be allowed to continue working at the Institute for the Restoration of Monuments.

Some time later, Mindaugas' parents were visited by a security agent, calling himself a "doctor".

"Do you know what awaits Mindaugas?" asked the visitor, and acting like a friend, he offered a solution.

"Perhaps he could be declared ill, and treated at home? Has no

one in your family ever suffered mental illness? Perhaps you have noticed something strange in Mindaugas' conduct?"

So the frightened parents, together with the "doctor" began to look for "aberrations" in Mindaugas' behavior.

Very soon, Mindaugas received a summons to present himself to the military commissar's office "for a routine medical examination".

One physician, after checking arm and leg reflexes, referred Tamonis to the Psycho-Neurological Dispensary in Vilnius, on *Vasaros gatvė*. The nurse explained to Tamonis that she had orders not to let him leave.

Thus Tamonis, having dared to speak to the Soviet government the truth about Lithuania, was placed in the psycho-neurological hospital, just like General Grigorenko, Medvedev, Pliuščas, and others who in some way offended the present government regime.

Doctor (Mrs.) Vaičiūnienė (a Russian) began intense "therapy". She proceeded to inject insulin in doses so large as to produce shock; he would lose consciousness, and then, upon injection of glucose, would begin to regain consciousness, toss about, and would be tied to the bed for some hours.

This method of "therapy" can leave indelible marks on the psyche of a healthy person. Tamonis is also given other preparations, whose names are unknown.

When Tamonis tried to refuse the treatments, he was told that he would be transferred to the First Ward, where the injections are administered by force.

As a result of such "therapy" Tamonis' metabolism has been damaged, he quickly gained 17 kilograms, has begun to suffer from insomnia, and cannot read at all.

Tamonis had to answer a questionnaire made up of 564 questions concerning his personal life, politics, religion: does he believe in God, does he attend church, etc.

At the Psycho-Neurological Hospital in Vilnius are other similar "patients", sent by the military commissars to be healed "of their beliefs".

Doctor Vaičiūnienė usually discusses Tamonis' behavior with him, urging him to change his attitudes.

Mindaugas Tamonis, 33, married, has two children, and is a poet. His verse was published under the pseudonym of Tomas Kur-

šius in *Literatūra ir Menas (Literature and Art)*, *Poezijos Pavasaris (Poetic Spring)*, and in the emigré journal, *Metmenys*.

CASE NO. 345

In ten months of imprisonment, Petras Pluira was allowed to write his wife just one letter.

* * *

The mother of Virgilijus Jaugela has not received one letter from her son for 5! months.

* * *

Virgilijus' interrogator, Captain Pilelis, mentioned to Virgilijus' mother that in twenty years of work, he has never met such a man—"terribly stubborn and always praying."

J. Gražys has written one letter from prison, in which he says that his health has suffered greatly.

* * *

During the latter part of September Petras Pluira's wife received from the Prosecutor of the Republic the news that her husband's case has been prepared and has been turned over to the court.

* * *

The *Chronicle* has no further information about the prisoners.

* * *

ARCHDIOCESE OF VILNIUS

Vilnius

On August 27, 1974, a large group of State security agents, under the command of Lt. Col. Petruškevičius, carried out a search of (Miss) Nijolė Sadūnaitė's apartment (Lazdynai, Architektų g. 27-2).

The search took several hours. Confiscated in its course were: a typewriter, a partly copied issue of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* No. n and some other issues of the *Chronicle*.

Nijolė Sadūnaitė was arrested and to this day is being held in the Security Prison in Vilnius, Lenino pr. 40. She is accused of transgressing paragraph No. 68 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR—anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.

Miss Sadūnaitė took care of Canon Petras Rauda for a long time until his death. (See *Chronicle* No. 10 — Transí. Note.)

* * *

In November, 1974, the Conference of European Catholics in Berlin will be attended by a group of priests from Lithuania, being organized not by Church leaders, but by official of the atheistic government. The candidates are not even asked whether they wish to go, but only told that they must present eight photographs and prepare for the journey. In order that the group of Lithuanian priests might show more solidarity, some priests loyal to the Church are being forced to go to Berlin.

What will the representatives of the Church in Lithuania say at the Conference of European Catholics? There are no prayer books. For reproducing prayer books and religious literature believers are rotting in security prison. Two bishops are in exile. Security organs continue to terrorize the seminary. Schoolchildren are harassed for their religious beliefs. If the delegates from Lithuania keep quiet about these matters and use their priests' cassocks to cover up the hurts of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, how will the faithful of Lithuania and history judge them?

* * *

ARCHDIOCESE OF KAUNAS

K a u n a s

In the spring of 1974, the rector of the seminary in Kaunas announced to the seminarians that this year the government promised to allow more candidates to enter the seminary: about thirteen. Perhaps the atheists thought that there would not be enough applicants. The seminary administration sent the Commissioner for Religious Affairs seventeen candidates. Commissioner Tumėnas and his advisors from the State Security Committee, the Party Central Committee and others deleted five names. One candidate approved by Tumėnas was rejected by the Seminary administration. One of those certified did not show up at the seminary. Hence, this year there are ten seminarians in the first year class.

Three candidates rejected by Tumėnas had completed higher studies.

Š i l u v a

In the beginning of September, during the Feast of Our Lady of Siluva (Sept. 8. — Transi. Note) thousands of people flowed into

Šiluva. On Sundays, the automobiles could not get into the town of Šiluva and were ordered by the Inspector of Automobiles to park in the fields. The Automobile Inspectors demonstratively wrote down the license numbers.

During the annual Feast of Our Lady of Šiluva, about 50,000 people receive Holy Communion.

Šiauliai

On May 27, 1974, Leonas Šileikis, a pupil in the seventh grade at Šiauliai Middle School V, was summoned to a meeting of the administration, where his faith was to be considered. Leonas' father came to the meeting uninvited. Taking part were: Assistant Principal (Mrs.) Misiūnienė, (Mrs.) Jakimčienė and five other teachers.

They asked Leonas whether he had read the atheistic books which the teachers had given him to read. The pupil stated he had read them—six in all.

"What do you think of these books?"

"They are lies and calumnies," Leonas replied.

After a long diatribe against religion, Teacher Misiūnienė asked Leonas twice:

"Do you renounce your faith?"

"I have believed and I will continue to believe."

Sending the pupil out of the office, Teacher Misiūnienė explained to Šileikis the damage religion does to children.

"It is not true that religion is harmful," retorted Šileikis, "today religion is trodden underfoot; and the pupils do not respect their teachers, smoke, drink, and even fornicate: those are the fruits of atheism."

"Nowadays very few people go to church, so one must go along with the majority," explained Teacher Jakimčienė.

"Only a dead body is carried along by the current, but a live person can always swim against the stream."

"You will block the road to higher studies for your children by your beliefs," Teacher Misiūnienė tried to convince him.

"It is not I who will block the road, but you, the atheists. Why, in the long run, is education necessary, if one must renounce the most valuable thing, one's faith? You, honorable teachers, should be punished according to Soviet law for persecuting the child for his religion."

"We will make your child an atheist yet!" exclaimed Misiūnienė.

"As much as I have been in your sessions, I have become convinced that you are more concerned about making the child a hypocrite, than an atheist, since you have more than once emphasized, 'Believe as much as you want, but in our presence, renounce God'."

It is not clear when the atheists of Šiauliai will leave the Šileikis family in peace.

DIOCESE OF PANEVĖŽYS

D a u g e l i a i

The Festival of St. Anthony was scheduled on June 9, 1974, in the church at Daugeliai (Region of Utena). On that occasion, Father Stanislovas Krumpļiauskas, protegee of the pastor, Father Petras Baltuška, was planning to offer his first Mass. The pastor informed his parishioners of the approaching festivities.

On June 3, J. Labanauskas, vicechairman of the Executive Committee of the Region of Utena, arrived and began to accuse the pastor of ignoring both—Soviet and Church law. Father Baltuška, it was alleged, was planning to celebrate the Feast Day June 9 instead of June 16 without informing the regional authorities about the priests who were expected, or of the First Mass.

The pastor explained that the choice of dates for celebrating religious festivals was his prerogative. There would be nothing different in this festival from others, everything would be carried out according to liturgical norms of the Church, and for such things no permission from the Region were needed.

Furious, the regional functionary berated the pastor, saying that he did not keep any of the Soviet laws, and therefore would be transferred to another region, or suspended from priestly functions.

The pastor suggested that the vicechairman read the Constitution and show him which paragraph he was transgressing.

The vicechairman threatened to report everything to the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, and immediately placed a call to him. The Commissioner was not in, so vicechairman Labanauskas began to describe the pastor's "transgressions" to the Commissioner's secretary, saying that Father Baltuška would not recognize any laws, that he

planned to invite as many priests as he wished, even though it were ten, since this was entirely his affair.

The pastor retorted to the vicechairman, "Aren't you ashamed to lie? When did I say that I would keep no laws? Here you are, speaking with the Ministry, and you tell lies. Let me have the phone."

The vicechairman would not allow him to speak. Moreover, he scolded the pastor, accusing him of controlling the parish council, and of teaching the children catechism.

On June 5, a deputy of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs telephoned the pastor, and was informed of the religious feastday and the First Mass.

On June 6, the regional vicechairman again telephoned the pastor and informed him that he could have permission to celebrate the feast day, but not the first Mass. However, when the pastor explained that the deputy commissioner had no objection to the first Mass, the vicechairman had to capitulate.

The feast day and the first Mass went by very successfully. Taking part were seven priests, five seminarians and a good number of the faithful. However, not everyone came to pray. One woman stood in the church yard with a note book in hand taking notes.

On Ascension Thursday, June 13, the pastor was summoned to district headquarters, where he was met by a committee made up of: Collective Farm Chairman J. Maradnskas, Collective Farm Party Organization Secretary (Miss) I. Vitaitė, and District Chairwoman (Mrs.) Stankevičienė.

The committee discussed the pastor's "offenses". The greatest blame was thrown up by the chairman of the collective farm, who was of the opinion that a great offense had been committed because the feast day had been celebrated June 9.

The pastor was ordered to submit a written explanation. The district chair woman drafted a confession, which the pastor refused to sign.

That same day the pastor was presented with a summons to appear before the Executive Committee of the Utena Region on June 14, where his case would be considered.

On June 14, the Administrative Committee of the Executive Committee of the Region of Utena: Chairman B. Linartas, Secretary (Mrs.) J. Narbutienė, members: J. Zuika (Chief of the Militia), B.

Surgailis and J. Labanauskas fined Father Baltuška thirty rubles because "on June 9, 1974, without permission of the Regional Executive Committee he invited ten priests of other regions to perform religious ministrations, and in this way offended against the third sub-paragraph of the May 12, 1966, order of the Praesidium of the Lithuanian SSR Supreme Council."

K r i a u n o s

On June 29-30, 1974, in the church of Obeliai, Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas was scheduled to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in the church of Obeliai, and all the children of the area were preparing for the solemnity.

On June 5, 1974, the mothers gathered in the church at Kriaunai with their children, so that the pastor might ascertain whether the children were prepared to receive the sacrament. Fifteen minutes later a committee came storming into the church: Party Secretary Kastauskas, of the Communal Farm of Kriaunai, District Chairwoman (Mrs.) Kralikienė, Principal Tautkevičius of the school, and Vabelis, an agronomist from the communal farm.

At that point, the pastor, Father Petras Adomonis, was explaining to the children and teachers what had to be known to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The committee told the pastor that he had broken the law, and wrote a summons for him.

On June 12, 1974, the pastor of Kriaunai, Father Petras Adomonis, was summoned before the Executive Committee of the Region of Rokiškis. The Administrative Committee unanimously declared the pastor guilty and fined him fifty rubles. As they released him, they warned that in the event of a second offense, he would receive up to three years of imprisonment.

In explanation, Father Adomonis reminded the committee that teaching religion privately did not contravene Lenin's decree of January 23, 1918, in which Paragraph 9 states:

"The school is separated from the Church. Teaching religion in state, public, or private schools, in which matters of general education are taught, is not allowed. Citizens may teach and study religion privately."

Matters of general education have never been taught in church; only religious matter. Here religious knowledge is ascertained, and where necessary, these things are explained.

Committee chairman Eigelis stated that it was so earlier, but that now it is different: You are allowed to question the children only singly, in complete isolation from other children, without even the parents listening.

When the child gives an incorrect response, one may not explain to him, since that would be teaching.

Atheist fanaticism is able to make a school of one child, to say nothing of 25 gathered in the church at Kriaunai.

The decision of the Administrative Committee concluded:

"The punishment of the pastor disturbed not only believers but also people who had doubts about the Church. In spite of the efforts of atheists to interfere with the confirmation of children and youth, 163 young parishioners of Kriaunai prepared themselves and were confirmed.

June 29-30, 2,860 children and young adults received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

M i e ž i š k i a i

From October, 1973, until April, 1974, the Directorate of the state farms was in the habit of inviting workers during working hours to attend atheistic lectures. Those who did not come to the lectures were marked absent, while those who attended received their wages, as though they had worked that day, "for technical training". Eighth and Ninth-graders were forced to attend the lectures. In school, lectures on atheism were given by Lapinskas, a regional official.

Before Easter, 1974, Regional Party Secretary (Mrs.) J. Kalakevičienė visited Director Valaitis of the state farm and demanded that the latter declare Easter a workday.

The director, intimidated by the regional government, ordered the formen to be sure to get the people out for work on Easter, and to make sure it was in public, where it could be seen from the road that sowing was taking place. Those who had no more serious work had to clear stones from the fields.

Forewomen (Miss) Kripaitytė and (Miss) Vasiliauskaitė showed special zeal. Miss Kripaitytė asked the workers with tears in her eyes,

"Do me a favor and turn out for work, because otherwise I shall be discharged."

The workers were even treated to beer, just so they would work on Easter Sunday. Miss Vasiliauskaitė even demanded the signing of a pledge that one would come to work on Easter. Farm office workers had to work also. Some of the tractor drivers and truck drivers cooperated but in general there were few workers.

There was no end to the annoyance of the believers: "Even in the days of serfdom, people did not have to work on holidays, but now they make fun of our beliefs."

DIOCESE OF TELŠIAI

Šatės

In April, 1974, the faithful of the Parish of Šatės, under the leadership of the Parish Council, erected in the church yard a statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Local government officials ordered the pastor of Šatės, Father Senkus, to demolish the monument.

"If you do not remove the statue from the churchyard, we will transfer you out of the parish," the officials said. Father Senkus then appealed to the Chancery of the Diocese of Telšiai. Monsignor Barauskas asked him to back down and demolish the monument.

On May 27, 1974, Petras Rudys, an official of the Region of Skuodas came to Šatės, and summoning District Chairman Juškus and Parish Council Chairman Juozas Valančiauskas, demanded that the statue be immediately removed from the churchyard.

The chairman of the parish council declared that the chancery of the Diocese of Telšiai had stated in 1954 that the erection of crosses in churchyards, cemeteries and the yards of believers was allowed.

"It says here that you may erect crosses, not statues;" Rudys fulminated, when he was familiarized with the chancery document.

The Parish Council Chairman explained that no parishioner would agree to pull down the statue.

"Can't you find some hoodlums in the district, get them drunk, or set fire to a wreck and aim it at the statue?" suggested Rudys to the area chairman. "There won't be anything left of this 'Mother of God'."

Such talk aroused deep resentment among the faithful folk, who said,

"The government officials need the help of drunken hoodlums to destroy crosses and statues."

On June 24, 1974, the Parish Council of Šatės received the following message:

"The parish council of Šatės is ordered to demolish voluntarily within one month of the verdict the statue which has been erected.

Signed: Vice Chairman C. Sabanskis."

The faithful, upon learning of this decision on the part of the District, decided not to give in:

"What harm to government officials is the statue in the church yard. Let them rather go after the hoodlums and drunks. They themselves proclaim religious freedom. They declare that there is freedom of religion, while with the hoodlums' help, they destroy crosses and statues."

Over the protests of the faithful, Assistant Commissioner for Religious Affairs Murnikov came to Šatės and declared that "for the sake of peace", the statue should remain standing in the church yard. Murnikov even had himself photographed at the statue.

B a r s t y č i a i

In 1937, the faithful of Barstyčiai, under the leadership of the pastor, Father Stasiulis, erected alongside the churchyard, a concrete monument, four metres high, which they decorated artistically with a crucifix, the pylons of Gediminas and an anchor.

On August 8, 1974, at the orders of the Executive Committee of the Region of Skuodas, the monument was knocked down and demolished.

That day a group of militiamen arrived in Barstyčiai, along with Director Marčiauskas of the state farm, District Chairman Malakauskas, and Medical aide Viktinis. Since the local tractordrivers refused to pull down the monument, even though they were offered 400 rubles, a Russian tractordriver was summoned from Skuodas.

The supervisor of the MSV of Aleksandrija sent the young tractor driver to Barstyčiai, explained to him that he would be required to move the monument to another site. When he arrived at Barstyčiai, government officials told him to dig a hole next to the monument.

"What will my believing parents say to me?" the bulldozer operator tried to object.

"Just try to disobey orders, and you'll end up with the polar bears," the militia threatened the young man. The militia dispersed people who gathered around. A store nearby was closed, so that the people would not congregate.

The pulling down of the cross aroused universal resentment among the people.

Lekstutis Perminas and some other men received jail sentences for disrespectful utterances against the Soviet government, while others were given fines. Paulauskas had a camera confiscated, because he tried to photograph the monument-wreckers.

August 9, some prisoners brought to Skuodas for that purpose broke the monument into pieces and hauled them off. The broken pieces of the Crucified were claimed by (Miss) Poškaitė, a resident of Barstyčiai.

The same day that the monument in Barstyčiai was demolished, its initiator, Father Juozas Stasiulis, died in Mažeikiai.

T r y š k i a i

Not far from Tryškiai at the roadside stood a very beautiful old cement cross. In the spring of 1974, government officials of Tryškiai demolished the cross and threw the pieces into a lake nearby.

M o s é d i s

In the parish of Mosėdis, in the Village of Šatraminai, many years ago, an artistic cross was erected. It was preserved as a historical monument, and the faithful would decorate it with flowers. In 1969, Apolinaras Kvietkauskas, Chairman of the Communal Farm destroyed the cross. Someone wrote a complaint to Vilnius, that historical monuments are being destroyed. A fact-finding commission came to the village and supposedly investigated. The culprits, however, were not punished.

D a r b ě n a i

Principal Mažonis, of the Darbėnai middle school, expelled Adėlė Silaitė, a tenth-grader and member of the Communist Youth League, for going to Confession at the church of Darbėnai. In the opinion of Mažonis, expulsion from school is too lenient a punishment for "such an offense". The pupil was able to finish middle school only in another school.

Let atheistic educators themselves decide how to judge morally such behavior: At first the pupil is pressured to join the Communist League, even though he or she believes in God and practices the Faith. In the opinion of the atheists, such enrollment does not constitute hypocrisy.

Once enrolled, the child is strictly forbidden to practice one's religion. How can a Communist Youth League Member hypocritically disregard the rules of the organization!

K l a i p ė d a

Teacher (Mrs.) Verbauskienė recruits pupils by force for the Pioneers, and demands that they attend meetings. Those who fail to do so have their conduct mark lowered.

T e l š i a i

Priests and faithful of the Diocese of Telšiai are scandalized and ask why the portrait of Lening hangs in the Diocesan chancery. It belongs there as much as a crucifix does in a Party bureau. In the opinion of the Faithful, this portrait must be transferred to the residence of the Diocesan workers.

K e t v e r g a i

Principal (Miss) Simukaitytė of the Ketvergai elementary school pressured eighth-graders to enroll in the Communist Youth League.

"We don't wish to and we won't," the pupils objected.

"Then why did you join the Pioneers, if you do not wish to join the Communist Youth League now?" the principal demanded of a pupil.

"I was stupid, and so I joined," replied the pupil, "Teacher (Mrs.) Domarkienė made me join the Pioneers by beating me with a ruler, but now nothing will make me join."

DIOCESE OF VILKAVIŠKIS

M e t e l i a i

Chairman Mikelionis of the Executive Committee of the District of Žagariai, at the orders of the security police, on June 24, 1974, sent Ignas Klimavičius, a resident of the Village of Buckūnai, the following notice:

"Since you did not conform to the approved plans for a dwelling, (You erected a cross at the stairs), thereby engaging in private

construction, we therefore suggest that you demolish the privately erected item within five days.

"If this structure is not demolished within the time indicated, Paragraph 114 of the Civil Code of the Lithuanian SSR will be applied to you."

Klimavičius did not demolish the cross. It seems as though officials of the Region of Lazdijai decided to leave the "structure" in peace.

S i m n a s

Teacher Meškelevičius of the Simnas Middle School, a dedicated atheist, wrote in the record of Romas Valutkevičius, who was completing the eighth grade in 1974:

"Romas* childhood, adolescence and now his transition to young adulthood have been accompanied by a deep-seated religious fanaticism. He came to school with a religiosity instilled by his father and systematized by the priest. He is a veteran altar-boy...

"During one trimester in the eighth grade, his conduct mark was lowered for disregarding the norms for pupil behavior; i.e. for specially manifested resistance to the Soviet school and the Soviet teacher... Otherwise he is well-behaved, quiet, and his attendance has been good."

What was the nature of Romas' "resistance to the Soviet school"? Teacher Meškelevičius dictated to the eighth-graders an atheistic piece, and Valutkevičius refused to write it.

Teacher Meškelevičius dragged him down to the teachers' room, and scolded him. Just so that he might be obedient to his atheistic teachers in the future, he was slapped around by the principal, (Mrs.) Guzevičienė.

DIOCESE OF KAIŠIADORYS

S t a k l i š k ė s

On June 18, 1974, a bill of complaint was written out against the parish pastor, Father Kazlauskas:

"I, Kęstutis Garmus, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Stakliškiai, with Juozas Ulozas and Albinas Kaziulis as witnesses, have written up this warrant concerning the fact that Jonas Kazlauskas, son of Vincas, born 1906, did on June 18, 1974, in the church at Stakliškiai teach minors—45 children—catechism, and did thereby

transgress Paragraph 142 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR."

That same day, the district chairman sent the pastor a warning: "Please cease teaching children forthwith."

On June 28, 1974, the Administrative Committee of the Executive Committee of the Region of Prienai (Chairman Stakionis, Vice Chairman Arbadauskas, Secretary Ramanauskas, and members (Mrs.) G. Mickienė and P. Svežauskas) fined the pastor of Stakliškės, Father Jonas Kazlauskas, 50 rubles for teaching catechism to children.

* * *

In Stakliškės, near the churchyard stands a wayside shrine with a plaque attached:

"In Commemoration of the Ten-Year Jubilee of Independence. Lord, protect Lithuania! The Parishioners of Stakliškiai."

In August, 1971, the government allowed the shrine to be renovated, but ordered the plaque with its inscription to be removed.

On September 17, 1971, Chairman J. Glemža, of the Administration for Museums and Cultural Monuments again demanded that the plaque be removed and threatened to take sterner measures.

In 1972 the parish council of Stakliškiai was fined 50 rubles for failing to remove the "anti-Soviet plaque".

* * *

During the entire post-(World) war (II) era, monuments were destroyed which in the least way recalled Lithuania's years of independence.

For example, the *Pavasarininkai* (Farmers' Catholic Action organization — Transl. Note) (Region of Kaišiadorys) had erected alongside the main road of the village a jubilee cross of stone. It was inscribed "For God and Country".

One June night in 1964, the cross disappeared. On July 4 of the same year, a resident of the village of Kiemeliai (now called Stasiūnai) named Ramunis, on his way through the peat bogs of Kaišiadorys, noticed in one pond a stone cross. When it was raised, it was discovered that this was the missing *Pavasarininkai* cross from the Village of Mižiškiai.

The salvaged cross was hauled off to the parish cemetery. During the night, however, the cross disappeared from the cemetery. To this day it is unclear how or where the atheists did away with it.

THE LAND OF MARY LIVES

In 1974, in Lithuania, thousands of children and young adults received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The figures given below show that religious life in Lithuania lives, in spite of the efforts of the atheists.

In Dotnuva, 1526 persons were confirmed.

In Tytuvėnai, 2456 " " "

In Prienai, 2702 " "

In Šilalė, 5100

In Alanta, 2000 "

In Griškabūdys, 1200 " " "

In Obeliai, 2860

THE HILL OF CROSSES

If you want to feel the real spirit of the Lithuanian people, take the road from Šiauliai to Joniškis. Twelve kilometers distant, on the right side of the road is a sign, "Daumantai 1 km."

One kilometer further on, again on the right side of the road, you will see a hillock covered with crosses. This is the fortress-hill of Jurgaičiai—The Hill of Crosses. You go past a brook overgrown with bushes and take the path up a saddle-shaped rise. At the northern corner of the hill stands a large rock, on which are carved the dates "1861-1764". The dates of the uprising and of its suppression speak passionately to the Lithuanian consciousness.

Among inhabitants of the area there is a legend that at the foot of the Fortress Hill of Jurgaičiai once stood a chapel, to which the insurgents came to pray. Cossacks barred the chapel doors and in three days buried the insurgents alive. With the passage of time, the roof beams rotted, the roof caved in, and hence the saddle shape of the hillock.

At first commemorating the insurgents, and later as votaries, the people constantly brought crosses and erected them on the hill.

At the orders of (Mrs.) L. Diržinskaitė-Pliušchenko, the crosses were destroyed. Overnight, however, like mushrooms after a rain, they reappeared.

A guard was mounted, security police stood watch, the inhabitants of the area were interrogated, threatened and terrorized, but

the crosses kept sprouting on the hillock. It was as though the living spirit of the insurgents was saying, "Don't give in!"

The last major attempt to destroy the crosses was made in 1973. A year went by and hundreds of crosses appeared—some planted in the ground, some hung on large crosses, and others still placed up in trees.

It may be that the atheists' hatred will destroy them again, but one thing is clear: they will show up once more.

THE MUSEUM OF ATHEISM

In 1965 the Church of St. Casimir in Vilnius was turned into a museum of atheism.

In *Vakarinės Naujienos* (*The Evening News*) it is periodically announced that the museum pays cash for any articles of worship. Similar announcements are carried in regional newspapers. It is emphasized that the articles so redeemed will not be destroyed or profaned, but preserved for the future.

It appears that the Museum of Atheism buys up even prayer books which used to be published in large editions.

Students of the Kaunas Polytechnic Institute, of the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture and other schools of higher learning receive credits in atheism for bringing in a prayer book.

The museum staff arranges expeditions throughout Lithuania, pretending to be ethnographers, staff members of the Museum of History and Ethnography—anything but atheists. To hear them, one would think that a prayer book or some other religious work is a great treasure.

More than one Catholic, having turned in a religious book with the best of intentions—"Let the young people read it and tell others about it."—realized too late that their visitors were not Catholics, but atheists.

Arriving in a region, they warn the authorities not to tell anyone that an expedition has arrived from the Museum of Atheism. The members of the expedition equip themselves with forms from the Museum of History and Ethnography. In obtaining works of religious art they do not hesitate to use deceit and even force.

For example, staff members of the Museum of Atheism, with the assistance of the government, took the keys to the chapel of the

cemetery of Mosédžiai, planning to requisition a picture. When a woman protested, they tried to take the picture by force.

In order that the Museum of Atheism might have as many patrons as possible, programs are arranged there, having nothing to do with atheism; e.g., an evening of folklore from Kupiškis, an evening with the travel expert S. Poška, and the like. In the latter case, a film about India had been promised, but instead an attempt was made to show an atheistic film. Only when the audience began to jeer, was it announced that due to the break-down of the projector, the film would not be shown.

Although admission to the Museum of Atheism is free, nevertheless attendance is sparse. Of course, teachers bringing pupils to see the sights of Vilnius are required to bring them to the Museum of Atheism.

In spite of efforts to the contrary, it has been impossible to avoid vulgarity in the exhibits and injury to the feelings of the faithful: sacred liturgical vessels are exhibited, anti-religious caricatures hang on the walls, etc.

Entries in the visitors' book show that many people are deeply disturbed that the museum has been set up in a church. When Napoleon turned the same church into a stable in 1812, he desecrated it less than the atheists today.

"I came, I saw, and only here for the first time did I feel that I believe in God. A.R." (Notation in the visitors' book).

To assist the persecuted Catholics of Lithuania,
please send your offerings, tax-deductible, to:

Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, Inc.
64-09 56th Road, Maspeth, N Y. 11378