



**CHRONICLE
OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN
LITHUANIA
NO. 14**



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IN LITHUANIA
No. 14

A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original,
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA NR. 14
Documenting Today's Struggle for Human Rights
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1972, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* has scrupulously documented the struggle for human rights in that Soviet-occupied country, on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.

Laboriously typed in carbon copies, and passed secretly from hand to hand, the *Chronicle* is ultimately smuggled out to the western world, where it has caused a sensation.

The *Chronicle* describes the heroic efforts of some 3 million Lithuanians, 85.5% Roman Catholics of the western rite when the country was forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, to preserve the faith of their forebears.

It is a story of six dioceses with no resident bishop and no normal contacts with the outside world, trying to maintain traditional ecclesiastical forms of administration. In reality, all decisions are made by the state-appointed Deputy for Religious Affairs—an atheist.

It is the story of the struggle between clergy who have decided for one reason or another to cooperate with the regime, and stubborn dissident priests and faithful insisting on their rights under the Soviet Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Natural Law.

It is the record of heroic parents of children, who insist on rearing their offspring in the Catholic Faith, against all efforts by teachers and government youth leaders to dragoon youngsters into various Communist youth organizations.

The *Chronicle* is the record of mere school children risking the wrath of atheistic teachers and even of Security police, to go to church or sing in a choir.

Constantly harassed in one way or another, the religious believers of Lithuania find themselves in the position of second-class citizens.

Denied access to mass media to tell their story, or to religious literature to nourish their faith, the Catholics of Lithuania find it necessary to photo-copy such religious literature as they can lay their hands on.

Ironically, the Soviet Constitution, under which the people of Lithuania are forced to live, contains glowing guarantees of freedom of conscience, of assembly, of press, and of speech.

In practice, such constitutional guarantees are over-ridden by unwritten administrative decrees, verbal interpretations, and galling bureaucratic high-handedness, giving atheism the position of the established religion of the Soviet Union and its subject territories.

Issue No. 14 of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* reports the latest attempts by the faithful to free from government-enforced exile—amounting to house-arrest—the beloved Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius of Kaišiadorys.

It describes state-tolerated activities of break-in artists vandalizing Catholic churches, harassment of priests ministering to the sick, and elaborate attempts to discredit the clergy.

Particularly strange is the willingness of the Communist regime to bring all the weight of state security machinery to bear upon such disproportionate targets as children who go to church.

The message of the *Chronicle*, loud and clear, is that the atheistic government is slowly strangling the Church in Lithuania, while doing its best to make it look like the Church is dying a natural death. The people of Lithuania are risking imprisonment, labor camp, and torture to make sure that we are not deceived.

In this translation, every effort has been made to remain faithful to the original in every respect, even at the expense of style in some instances. When absolutely necessary, a brief Translator's Note provides background within the text itself.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Translation Editor

CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA

No. 14, 1975

Published since 1972

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STATEMENTS

To the Deputy for Religious Affairs,
Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic,

S t a t e m e n t

We, the undersigned priests of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys hereby request that Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, presently residing in the region of Biržai, Nemunėlio Radviliškis, be allowed to perform his duties as the Bishop of Kaišiadorys.

July 30, 1974

Sender: Canon Jonas Dzekunskas, residing in Žiežmariai, region of Kaišiadorys.

The statement was signed by 45 priests of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys: T. Akstinas, A. Alkovikas, A. Anusevičius, A. Arminas, A. Cerna, Z. Cervokas, J. Čiurlionis, J. Danyla, Canon J. Dzekunskas, P. Genevičius, P. Gerbutavičius, J. Gylys, Z. Gustainis, Canon J. Jonys, A. Jurgilas, J. Kaušyla, I. Kavaliauskas, J. Kazlauskas, Canon St. Kiškis, B. Klimas, E. Kraujalis, P. Leskauskas, J. Matulaitis, J. Masalskas, N. Miknevičius, A. Milašius, H. Misiūnas, Z. Navickas, Z. Neciunskas, M. Petkevičius, Canon J. Pilka, V. Pinkevičius, L. Puzonas, S. Smolinskis, Z. Stančiauskas, St. Stankevičius, R. Šalčiūnas, P. Žiugžda, J. Tomkus, P. Valadka, P. Venckus, C. Zažeckas, J. Zubrus, J. Zvinys, K. Žilys.

A duplicate statement was sent to the Council of Religious Affairs in Moscow.

On September 5, 1974, the Deputy for Religious Affairs, K. Tumėnas, sent for the present pastor of Daugai Parish, Canon Jonas Pilka.

"Why are you dissatisfied with the current administrator of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys?" asked the deputy. "Here is a document which you signed. It is known to us that you are one of the main initiators of this document."

"This document is not intended to be against the administrator," explained Canon Pilka, "We have a Bishop, Vincentas Sladkevičius, who is not allowed by government officials to perform his duties. That is why we, the priests of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys, ask that the bishop be allowed to resume his duties, since a diocese ruled by an administrator is an abnormal situation."

"Yes," agreed Tumėnas, "the situation is truly abnormal, but with such documents you cause the administrator of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys great unpleasantness."

Tumėnas explained further that Bishop Sladkevičius was consecrated without the approval of the government, and therefore he could not be allowed to resume his duties as the Bishop of Kaišiadorys.

"Did Bishop Sladkevičius ask the priests to petition the government to allow him to resume these duties?" asked the deputy.

"No, he did not."

"Perhaps he does not wish to assume the duties of bishop; yet you take such steps without consulting him."

"Since the bishop accepted consecration as a bishop, it follows that he wishes to perform the functions of a bishop."

"When did you get the idea to draw up this document?"

"At the funeral of Canon Povilas Bakšys."

"Why does this document give no reason why you want Bishop Sladkevičius to resume the bishop's functions?"

"What reasons are necessary?" countered Canon Pilka. "He is the Bishop of Kaišiadorys and we priests ask that he be allowed to resume his duties as such."

"The Vatican made a mistake," explained Tumėnas, "Let the Vatican correct it."

"Bishop Steponavičius was consecrated in consultation with the government, but he is not allowed to perform his duties..."

"He did not act within Soviet Law."

The deputy then asked who organized the petition, who wrote the text, collected the signatures, etc. Canon Pilka refused to be an informer.

At the end of the discussion, Tumėnas explained that this document would not get a written answer, and ordered Canon Pilka to sign a statement that he had been acquainted with the reasons why Bishop Sladkevičius is not allowed to resume his duties as bishop.

"With this type of document you create great unpleasantness for the administrator, you hurt the bishop's cause, and the civil government does not want such documents."

Harassment of Priests Ministering to the Sick

To His Excellency the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis.

Statement by Rev. Jonas Babonas

I, the Rev. J. Babonas, as Curate for the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, Šiauliai, and the Church in Aukštelkė, was asked on May 30, 1974, to visit the sick at the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home of Aukštelkė. (Miss) Eugenija Gudeikytė, who asked me to come, explained that there were many sick people who wished to receive the sacraments. To serve these people faster and not to be too late, I asked the Rev. Alfred Vanagas to help me. After the evening services we went to the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home and administered the sacraments to the sick old people.

Wardrobe Attendant (Mrs.) Dana Mikalajūnienė, noticing us, insisted that Paramedic Navickas eject us. When he refused, (Mrs.) D. Mikalajūnienė informed the director of the home, Vladas Kačinskas. Toward the end of my ministration of the sacraments to the elderly sick, the director arrived, and stopping me, like a housebreaker, at the door, started to berate me. Noticing Paramedic Navickas and the nurse on duty, Janina Petrauskienė, in the corridor, the director started to abuse them and scream at them as loudly as he could.

Mockingly, he urged them to go to confession, just because they let a priest into the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home.

When she heard the commotion, (Miss) Gudeikytė, who had invited us, arrived. Director Kačinskas accused her as the organizer.

I tried to explain to the director that we did not violate the Constitution, nor Soviet law, since these allow the priest to administer the sacraments to the sick in prison, hospital, or home for the elderly, if the sick ask for the priest. We came to the Aukštelkė home requested by the elderly sick.

The director, however would have none of this. Cursing us and calling us scoundrels, hooligans and villains, he took me and Miss Gudeikytė to his office.

The director telephoned the assistant chairman of the Šiauliai *Rayon* Executive Committee, Beržinis, and members of the Security Committee that he had apprehended some priests who had broken in. The vice chairman said that he would come immediately, and ordered him to retain us.

An hour later, Vice Chairman Beržinis entered the office, together with Chief of Security Urbonavičius and two more Security agents.

Vice Chairman Beržinis asked if I knew him and introduced himself. Then Beržinis alleged that he had summoned me three times, but that I had never come. I explained that I had not received any such summons. He repeated the accusation two more times, but when asked on what date he had summoned me, he did not answer.

After this introduction, Miss Gudeikytė was taken to another room, and they started to interrogate and accuse me. Vice Chairman Beržinis, the director, and the security agents accused me of forcing my way into the home for the elderly. When I reminded them that Soviet law allows the priests to visit the sick in a hospital, home for the elderly, and even in prison, the Chief of Security agreed. However, he declared that the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home of Aukštelkė has its own rules. When I asked if the internal rules of a governmental institution can be in opposition to the laws of the government, the Chief of Security did not answer.

The officials paid no attention to my questions explanations.

I was accused of organizing the elderly to collect signatures of some kind. It seems that six months ago the residents of the Old

Peoples' and Invalids' Home of Aukštelkė wrote a petition to the chairman of the Executive Committee of the District of Šiauliai, to ask his intervention that Director Kačinskas allow a priest with the holy sacraments to visit the elderly sick. When one of the residents complained, the director confiscated this petition and would not allow it to be sent, even though it was signed by more than forty elderly people.

I was also accused, while working in Kaunas, of organizing the gathering of signatures; of organizing, upon my arrival in Šiauliai, the carrying of a cross to the Hill of Crosses; of serving the Church of Aukštelkė without a permit from Vice Chairman Beržinis; of collecting donations from the believers, etc.

In another room, (Miss) Eugenija Gudeikytė was interrogated. She, too, was thoroughly searched. The searchers took Eugenija's passport, prayerbook, the keys to the Church of Aukštelkė and everything else she had.

Vice Chairman Beržinis brought the church keys, showed them to me, and demanded to know why the keys were kept at this woman's home and not by the chairman of the church committee. I explained that Miss Gudeikytė decorates the church and takes care of the flowers, while the chairman of the church committee cannot be in the church all the time and take care of these things. Besides, there is no rectory in Aukštelkė, nor does anyone live close enough to the church to take care of it. The Vice Chairman demanded that I tell him to what convent Miss Gudeikytė belongs, since her actions showed her to be a nun. I said that she had no thought of belonging to any convent.

They demanded that I write an explanation of why I came to the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home of Aukštelkė, why I gave the church keys to Miss Gudeikytė, and why I collect offerings from the faithful in the Aukštelkė church.

I wrote what they asked. They also demanded that I write a statement to the bishop that "I do not want" to serve the faithful of the parish of Aukštelkė. At the end of the interrogation, the Chief of Security declared, "You forgive sins, but you must confess yours to us and receive forgiveness from us."

The officials summoned me before the Executive Committee of

the District of Šiauliai on June 4, 1974, and allowed me to leave for home only after two o'clock in the morning.

There have been similar misunderstandings earlier between the priests of the Aukštelkė church on the one hand, and the director of the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home and Vice Chairman Beržinis, on the other. Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs Rugienis, and later Tumėnas, were approached about this matter, but the situation did not change. The director of the home in Aukštelkė has declared that while he is there, no priest will be able to set his foot in the home to see the elderly.

On March 24, 1974, a priest with the sacraments was forced to return home without seeing the sick elderly. Director Kačinskas declared to Nurse Apolonija Gelminauskaitė that he would hit the priest on the head if he came to see the sick old people, and that she herself would be thrown into the cellar for a few days if she requested the priest to come.

The director also creates various obstacles when relatives and friends wish to bury a deceased resident with the rites of the Church.

All this shows that this last attack as well as all accusations were planned in advance.

On June 3, 1974, Eugenija Gudeikytė was summoned to the Security Committee, where she was intimidated, threatened and ordered to tell to which convent she belongs. Finally, after returning her passport and prayerbook, they pushed her out the door. The church keys were returned only when the chairman of the church committee, P. Lešinskas, went to the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Šiauliai.

The plaintiff, (Mrs.) Dana Mikalajūnienė, was honored by mention on an honor plaque, while Nurse Janina Petrauskienė, who showed the priest into the wards, received a strong reprimand.

On June 4, 1974, I went to the Executive Committee to see Vice Chairman Beržinis. A security agent was also present. Again the accusations and demands were repeated, but this time more gently and politely.

Later, the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Church of Šiauliai and the Church of Aukštelkė, the Rev. L. Mažonavičius, was also asked for explanations. Deputy Tumėnas himself was present; however, the results of this visit are as yet unknown.

Both the pastor, Father Mazonavicius, and I were reproached and told that the people in the Old Peoples' and Invalids' Home were outraged by the visit of the priest because there were also unbelievers present in the wards. The officials were silent when asked whether only the unbelievers should be given consideration, and not the believers. Are the believers not people also? It seems that, to their way of thinking, if you are a believer you are not a person.

All this shows that the desire to minister the sacraments to the elderly sick faces difficult and unusual conditions. I want your Excellency to be aware of the true sequence of events.

Šiauliai, June 20, 1974

Rev. T. Babonas

(This statement is condensed — Editor of the Lithuanian original.)

Harassment of Clergy for Assisting Each Other

To: The Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs;
(Mrs.) A. Gudukienė, Chairwoman,
Executive Committee of the District of Ignalina,
Chancery of the Archdiocese of Vilnius,

A STATEMENT BY THE REV. K. ŽEMĖNAS, RESIDING IN
THE REGION OF IGNALINA, IN NAUJAS DAUGĖLIŠKIS

On June 19, 1974, I was summoned before (Mrs.) A. Gudukienė, Chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the Region of Ignalina, who accused me of disobeying the law and, without permission from the *Rayon*, inviting priests to celebrate solemn religious feasts. She asked me to write an explanation.

I asked the chairwoman when any law was passed, and by whom, forbidding me to invite priests to solemn feasts without the permission of the District Executive Committee. She kindly explained that there is a higher authority over her. This authority verbally gives her various instructions which she then passes on to the priests in the same way. Also, I should know that the laws concerning the Church are not publicized. She advised me to purchase a brochure about Soviet laws concerning religion and freedom of conscience, and to read it.

I followed her suggestions but neither A. Vashchikov's *Tarybinių įstatymai apie Religinius kultus* ("Soviet Laws Concerning Religious Cults," Vilnius, 1963), nor J. Aničas' and J. Rimaitis' *Tarybinių įstatymai apie religinius kultus ir sąžinės laisvę* ("Soviet Laws Concerning Religious Cults and Freedom of Conscience," Vilnius, 1970) contains the above mentioned law. Besides, the brochures about Soviet law and religious cults are not copies of the law but only propaganda material helpful for the atheistic lecturer. It is not even clear from the contents of these brochures whose laws or regulations the authors are quoting, nor when these laws were passed. They list what is allowed and what is forbidden to the priests and the faithful, but which laws are concerned is not made clear.

Speaking of laws, we have to remember what they are. *Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas* ("Dictionary of Current Lithuanian Language," Vilnius, 1972) defines the word "law" as follows: "Law—Action of the highest government of the state, legally regulating relationships of the population." The Constitution of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic clearly states: "The Supreme Soviet of the LSSR is the only law-making organ of the LSSR" (art. 21), that only the "Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR passes laws" (art. 31), that "laws are publicized in the Lithuanian and Russian languages" (art. 25). That means if there are laws, they must be passed by the Supreme Soviet of LSSR or its Presidium and publicly proclaimed. Unpublished laws are not binding. Who made the law or regulation forbidding priests to invite other priests to help out on feast days without the permission of the *rayon*! Are the authors of the aforesaid brochures and atheistic articles the lawmakers?

The January 23, 1918, decree of Lenin *Concerning the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church*, consisting of thirteen points, does not speak at all about the duty of the priests to ask the *Rayon* Executive Committee for permission to invite priests to help in the parishes. On the contrary, the second point of this decree says: "It is forbidden within the boundaries of the Republic to make any local laws interfering with, or restricting, freedom of conscience." Is it not interference with freedom of conscience if a priest cannot help a fellow priest without permission of the civil government?

Besides, it must be recalled that the Church has its own Code

of Law, and dioceses their Synods, which oblige priests during large gatherings of the faithful to invite more priests, to satisfy the spiritual needs of these faithful. For example, see the decisions of the Synod of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Articles 22, 381 and 389.

I ask the right honorable Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs to explain whether the government of the *Rayon* of Ignalina, in demanding a request for permission to invite priests to a solemn religious feast, is acting within the law? If so, then by what law, passed by whom and at what date?

Rev. K. Žemėnas

N. Daugėliškis, June 22, 1974

P.S. (Mrs.) A. Gudukienė, Chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Ignalina, asked me to write an explanation on the same day (June 19) and to hand it in before 5 p.m. I wrote this only today because I wished to acquaint myself with the brochures recommended by the chairwoman.

The Rev. K. Žemėnas

(It is not yet known to the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* what reply the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs has given to the Rev. K. Žemėnas — Editor).

Interference with Church Renovation and' Electrification. Burglary of Churches

To: L. Brezhnev, General Secretary,
Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,
Council for Religious Affairs
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,
Presidium, Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian
Soviet Socialist Republic,
Deputy, Council for Religious Affairs of the LSSR,
The Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius —

STATEMENT OF THE REV. VLADAS ČERNIAUSKAS,
RESIDING IN THE *RAYON* OF IGNALINA, MIELAGĖNAI

The Rev. V. Miškinis labored in the parish of Mielagėnai more than thirty years. He was very old and sickly; therefore he could not

see to the renovation of the church. It is impossible for the parish council to take care of or direct the renovation, because some of the members are employed in civil work from which it is hard to even get one day off, especially for church affairs; other members are weak, elderly pensioners. At the request of the parish council of the Mielagėnai Church, I could start the renovations; however, the civil government interferes to such an extent that it is impossible to proceed.

In January, 1974, Vice Chairman of the *Rayon* of Ignalina, J. Vaitonis, handed me a registration form, and said:

"Write down what you wish to renovate and send the form to us. We will discuss it and issue the permission."

We did this. March 5, 1974, we wrote a statement to Vaitonis in which we listed everything that we intended to renovate. Not only did we not receive permission; no answer at all was sent to us. Since the floor of the church is completely rotten in spots, and dangerous even to walk on, we did renovate it. When they heard about this work, the assistant deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs, Vice Chairman of the District of Ignalina J. Vaitonis, and Chairman Švarcas of Mielagėnai district arrived. They berated us for renovating the floor of the church without permission.

Shortly, the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Ignalina sent a statement to be signed by the pastor and the chairman of the parish council of Mielagėnai Church. The document states that any renovation of the church without permission is forbidden.

About a month after the promise of Deputy Tumėnas, Chairman of the District of Mielagėnai, Švarcas, received a permit for some repairs to our church, but held it back. Rumors started flying that the Council of the District of Mielagėnai would now decide on its own what it would permit us to renovate.

Ours is a brick church. When it rains, the water pouring from the roof erodes the foundation; the walls become damp even inside the church. The church must be *renovated and saved without delay*. They refuse us a permit, and to wait is impossible. We started to work without permission. The faithful worked only in the evenings, when they finished their work in the collective farm, and on their days off—Saturdays.

One Saturday, just when the work started, Chairman Matkėnas

of the "New Way" Collective Farm came and scolded and threatened the workers, saying that in the future they would not get transportation from the collective farm, since they do not want to work overtime at the collective farm, but work for the church.

An invalid, Jonas Bačelis, pensioner Adolfas Kisielius, and D. Girdžiūnas were making benches for the church. When the administration of the collective farm heard about this, they gave the men work, so that they would not be able to work for the Church.

On December 6, 1963, residents of the Village of Krikoniai in a statement to Chairman Šumauskas of the Council of Ministry of LSSR wrote the following: "The Administration of Building and Construction of Anykščiai is finishing the electrification of the entire District of Mielagėnai; the church however, was left out and not electrified... Cattle and pig farms have electricity but it is forbidden to install it in the church. .. The parish council of the church of Mielagėnai says that they wrote five petitions, but received not a single reply..."

In this way, the people of Mielagėnai suffered for about 10 years; they wrote statements and visited high government offices themselves. In 1971 alone after writing a statement to the Chief of Building and Construction of Anykščiai, the parish council travelled to Anykščiai six times before they finally received a permit at the end of December, 1972.

Electricians of the electricity network of Ignalina—P. Štukėnas and M. Černiauskas—did not reappear after working in the church a couple of days. Later they declined to work in the church, because their supervisors told them, "If you wish to work in the church, submit your resignation; then you will be free to work where you wish."

Our church until now was an architectural monument of local significance. That is witnessed by a plaque attached to the wall of the church: "The Architectural Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR, John's Church, Architectural Monument, 1779, protected by the government. Vandalism of this monument is punishable by law."

How concerned the government is with the care of architectural monuments the above facts will bear witness: Permits are not issued for the most necessary repairs and the work itself is obstructed. Besides, in decisions concerning church architecture the Vice Chairper-

sons of the District Executive Committees are greater authorities than the Administration of Architectural Affairs. In April, 1974, Vice Chairman Vaitonis declared that the church of Mielagėnai is not an architectural monument, and only some details come under the category of architecture.

Of what use is this method of ideological warfare, directed against the believing working man, whose sweat-drenched bread strengthens all the children of the nation, while he looks with aching heart at his church, unable to renovate or beautify it? Of what use is such discrimination against the believing man?

For almost a year I have been trying to connect water to my apartment from the village water main, but it still is not done to this day. At the same time, Store Manager Mrs. Kaveckienė, a Communist-atheist living in the government requisitioned rectory, has long since had running water without any effort on her part. As a matter of fact, the chairman of the collective farm "New Way" gave me permission to put in running water, but Kaveckienė protested and everyone was silenced.

During the night of July 16-17, 1974, hoodlums broke into the Mielagėnai church: they broke a window, forced open the tabernacle, and took about 600 consecrated Hosts. We informed the Deputy for the Militia of Mielagėnai, Dėdelė, who waited until the following day to call in the Lieutenant of Militia of the *Rayon* of Ignalina, Rimiškis. When he arrived, he did not take photographs nor fingerprints, nor did he conduct an investigation. He even reproached us for not removing the portable gadget which helped the burglars leave the church, and for other things in connection with the church break-in. The lieutenant of the militia looked upon this event with complete detachment. In his opinion, there was little material loss.

Such a horrible desecration of the Holy Sacrament could only be done by the most fanatical atheists. It is even more horrible that the members of the militia do not look for them—it means that they agree with these deeds.

The woodcraft teacher of the High School of Mielagėnai, Bernardas Misiūnas, from the Village of Buckūnai, took part in a procession on the feast of Pentecost, carrying a banner. After that, he was asked to resign from his job. Since that time, Bernard has not worked in the school.

Do these events not bespeak discrimination against believers and the privileges of the atheists? This goes on not only in Mielagėnai but everywhere in Lithuania. To illustrate, I will remind you in an additional statement of the events which took place in S. Trakai where I was pastor from 1970 to 1973.

This discrimination against the believers is supported even by high government offices. All complaints written to high offices in Moscow or Vilnius are returned to *rayon* or to district offices. It is difficult to understand why higher government offices exist, if all church affairs are delegated to *Rayon* Executive Committees, district officials, or even local atheists. In effect, believers may not appeal to anyone; they are like slaves of the District Executive Committees and county officials; the officials do with them as they wish.

We appeal to the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to be allowed to confess our faith freely and openly without interference in the repairing of our churches.

Administrator of the Mielagėnai Church
The Rev. Vladas Černiauskas

Mielagėnai, 1974.XI.14.

* * *

APPENDIX TO THE STATEMENT OF 1974. XI. 14

In 1970 I was appointed administrator of the church of Old Trakai. The church roof was leaking; when it rained there were puddles of water inside the church. The parish council asked officials of the *Rayon* of Trakai to be allowed to repair the church. No written permit was issued; however, on May 10, 1971 the Chairman of the District of Old Trakai, Jasiulevičius, announced that we might repair it. When we tore off part of the roof, this same chairman started to chase the workers and ordered me to acknowledge in writing a warning forbidding any kind of renovation.

After this, various committees started arriving one after the other: On May 18, 1971 came a five-man commission led by Vice Chairman Akanovidus of the Executive Committee of the District; on May 19, a three-man commission; on May 20, a four-man commission, led by Akanovidus; on May 21, the same commission to-

gether with Deputy Rugienius of the Council for Religious Affairs. There were no results.

Akanovičius threatened the workers, and took from me the labor contract signed by the workers and the parish council. After that, the parish council went twice to the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs, once to the architectural department of the Ministry of Culture, and three times to the *Rayon* Office—in vain. However, out of the blue, the church of Old Trakai became an architectural monument. Until the renovation it was never described as such in any document. Next to the church, almost under the same roof, stands the Home of Culture—which was previously a Benedictine monastery. This building was rebuilt by *Rayon* officials, according to their own whims, without regard to any architectural rules. The front gate of the church and monastery was destroyed, leaving no trace.

Government officials, hearing about the renovation of the church, declared the church of Old Trakai an architectural monument. Until the renovation no one cared about this "monument". Why did not those commissions come around sooner; why did they take notice only when we started to renovate? It is possible that the aim of such "care" was to wait until the church started to collose and then to close it because of danger of accidents.

Since a part of the roof was already torn down, Vice Chairman Akanovičius gave a permit for repair in the fall of 1971.

When we finished repairing the roof, we sent a request in April, 1973, to J. Glemža, Chief of the Department of Museum and Cultural Monument Preservation of the Ministry of Culture of the LSSR, and G. Gailiušis, Director of the Monument Conservation Institute, concerning the painting of the inside and outside of the church, since the church had not been painted for over fifty years. We received no reply from either office.

The Rev. VI. Černiauskas

(Statement and appendix shortened—Editor)

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Vilnius. Because of his beliefs, Mindaugas Tamonis was tricked into commitment to the Psychiatric Hospital of Vilnius (Va-

saros g. #5) on June 17. Forced treatment (18 shock treatments) took place. After three months of this inhuman "medical treatment", Tamonis was released, with his health severely affected.

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At the end of October 1974, the citizens of Vilnius were amazed to see placards put up in the city concerning a commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the death of the famous horticulturist, priest, and friar, Jurgis Pabrėža, to take place in the atheism museum. Jurgis Pabrėža is alive even today in the hearts of many believers.

A few years ago, the members of the Folk Art Ensemble of Kurtuvėnai were very upset that their concert, without their permission, was scheduled in the desecrated Church of St. Casimir, a museum of atheism.

In 1974, the Kurtuvėnai Ensemble was again invited to Vilnius. However, when the members found out that the concert would take place in a closed Protestant church, they refused to go. The organizers of the concert and the folk song club were obliged to postpone the concert and to look for another auditorium.

* * *

Vilnius. In a part of Lithuania attached to northwestern White Russia, the Districts of Apsas, Vykžiai and Breslauja, functioning churches remain only in Delekas and Breslauja. The local government has continually forbidden taking children to church. For attending church, the children were terrorized in the schools, and the parents at work.

In 1974, the government allowed the pastor of Delekas, who had just returned from Poland, to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. One Sunday in June, thousands of parents gathered with their children in the Delekas church. When the local government saw the crowds of people, they sent representatives to the pastor and had him brought to the district office. Three hours passed but the pastor did not return. Then the mass of people marched on the office. After a heated exchange with the government officials the pastor was released.

Vilnius. September 12, 1974, J. Aničas gave a lecture in the Institute of Zoology and Parasitology. Following are a few thoughts from his lecture:

"The bishops of Lithuania are able to contact Rome, since contact with places abroad is free. When the Lithuanian clergy travelled to the Second Vatican Council for the first time, no one paid any attention to them; however, now they see that they are someone to be considered. The Vatican would like to use its ties with the Lithuanian bishops for anti-Soviet propaganda, but the bishops are loyal to the Soviet system.

"The clergy are not all loyal. Some of them are of an extremist frame of mind and hate the Soviet system. They write various declarations and falsify signatures. Even now, the government receives statements from some of them, copies of which are sent abroad. There *Draugas* (Chicago Lithuanian daily — Tr. Note) prints them in installments and the whole world is told that believers are persecuted in Lithuania. There is good reason to be stricter with these reactionary priests, but we act as leniently as possible and only in extreme cases do we repress them. The group of reactionary priests is not large: former monks—Jesuits, Marians, Franciscans. The young reactionary clergy have been raised in the influence of reactionary priests or are children of the former bourgeoisie.

"There are priests in Lithuania who wish to renounce the priesthood, but they still work in parishes. That is to our benefit, because they do not foster the spirit of faith in the people.

"Bishop Steponavičius was impossible to get along with. Some priests taught the children and led them into active participation in services. When Bishop Steponavičius was approached and asked to restrain such priests, he steadfastly refused. Therefore it was suggested that he move to Žagarė.

"Bishop Sladkevičius was consecrated in secret by Bishop Matulionis. It is a unique situation, to have a bishop performing the duties of pastor."

Asked how many believers there are in Lithuania, Aničas explained that sociological research will be conducted. The Academy of Science has already come to an agreement on this question with the Party Committee.

In the opinion of Aničas, the Vatican has a double policy: it supports Bishop Brizgys (spiritual leader of the free Lithuanian Catholics — Tr. Note) and simultaneously the current bishops of Lithuania.

In July, 1974, the Rev. Vladimir Prokopic was released from Lvov prison. He had been arrested on December 18, 1973, and charged with the preparation and distribution of religious literature, with accompanying a delegation of Ukrainian believers to Moscow, etc. Widely circulated rumors that Father Prokopic was committed to a psychiatric hospital were not confirmed. Released from the VSK prison, Father Prokopic returned to Vilnius, where he lives in his apartment.

On August 27, 1974, Security police searched the home of (Miss) Bronė Kibickaitė of Vilnius, but did not find anything. Before leaving, they threatened, "If this search is written up in the *Chronicle*, we will talk with you differently." At work, Miss Kibickaitė was urged to resign.

(The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* in printing news about people, does not ask their permission for obvious reasons. — Editor)

Harassment of Children who Practice Religion

K a u n a s . In the afternoon of October 27, 1974, a group of children gathered at the home of (Miss) Genė Žukauskaitė to pick up their First Communion photographs. At 5 p.m. five people arrived —one Security policeman and four members of the Party from the place where Miss Žukauskaitė worked. The intruders confiscated many of the First Communion photographs and wrote down the names and addresses of all the children, and the schools which they attend.

Soon, terrorizing of the children and their parents began. In School No. 24, the teacher of the fourth grade lined up pupils in front of the class and scolded them for receiving their First Communion.

The parents of the children were called to the school and reprimanded because they let their children go to church.

The Prosecutor's Office is investigating the "crime" of Miss Žukauskaitė. She was summoned for interrogation several times.

* * *

K a u n a s . In the spring of 1974, the Party Bureau of the Veterinary Academy considered the Academy's work in ethnography. Associate Professor (Mrs.) Bukaveckienė was removed as directress of heritage studies because the study group sang only the old Lithuanian folk songs. The main accusation against her was that during two study evenings, slides of Lithuanian crosses and such folk art masterpieces as a sculpture group depicting the Last Supper were shown. One member of the Party Bureau insisted that crosses and religious sculptures not only make the young people non-thinking, but also give a bad example to country women who come to sing, and compromise the atheists. When an opportunity arises, those same women could retort to the atheists that crosses are shown even at the Academy!

* * *

Š i a u l i a i . After the last destruction of the crosses, the Hill of Crosses became more beautiful every day. On the feast day of the Veneration of the Cross a very beautiful, artistic cross was erected on the Hill. This cross, two meters tall, bore the inscription: "We will conquer all obstacles with the Cross. Šiauliai, 9-14-74." Next to the cross, three metal "suns" appeared. (A form of traditional Lithuanian folk ornament — Transl. Note).

Early in the morning of November 22, 1974, the government destroyed all the crosses. A few days later, nine crosses could again be seen on the Hill of Crosses.

* * *

Š i l u v a . September 7, 1974, eight Russian Germans arrived for a religious festival from Volgograd to Šiluva. Two Security policemen seized one of the Germans, Rach, while he was walking to the church, and started to haul him to the militia. There he was searched and several German religious books plus a prayer book were seized. Rach was asked where he got the books.

Rach is the father of thirteen children, a well-respected member of a collective farm.

* * *

K a r s a k i š k i s . In the years following the war, the Soviet government nationalized all buildings belonging to the parish of Karsakiškis. The smallest building, which used to be the storage shed, was

left for the pastor. This is the third year that the government of the *Rayon* of Panevėžys is trying to force the pastor to move from this shed to the village. The main reason is that the pastor lives too close to the school.

The War Against Crosses and Shrines

Labanoras. March 6, 1974, Assistant Chairman Mačionis of the District of Švenčionys reprimanded the pastor of Labanoras, Father Liudvikas Puzonas, for blessing memorial crosses in the cemetery and for organizing in 1973 a procession in the cemetery on All Souls Day. According to Mačionis, a priest may not bless crosses or cemetery memorials without a license from the *Rayon*.

* * *

Skriaudžiai. June 30, 1974, the Rev. V. Čėsna erected four beautiful crosses in the churchyard of Skriaudžiai.

On August 2, 1974, the pastor, Father Čėsna, received the following statement from the Executive Committee of the District of Prienai:

"The Committee on Administrative Fines, consisting of Chairman Stakionis, Assistant Chairman Arbačiauskas, Secretary Ramanauskas, and members: (Mrs.) Mickienė and (Mr.) Švežauskas, after examining proofs that the Rev. Vincentas Čėsna, residing in Skriaudžiai, District of Prienai, violated government statutes concerning construction procedures, has decided to impose a fine of fifty rubles on the Rev. V. Čėsna."

When Father Čėsna painted the church of Barzdai in 1970, the Executive Committee of the District of Šakiai also imposed an administrative fine on him; and when he erected four crosses in the Barzdai churchyard, he was immediately transferred to the parish of Skriaudžiai.

On December 15, 1971, Father Čėsna received the following warning from the Executive Committee of the District of Prienai:

"It has been determined that in your sermons you touch on matters which are against the interests of the Soviet people. You speak

about the "degeneration" of the Lithuanian nation, placing the blame on the Soviet school, which has driven the youth from the Church; you speak about the jailing of innocent priests, etc.

"In this, you controvence the laws governing cults and you distort the truth. This is a warning to discontinue your sermons against the interests of the Soviet people.

K. Černeckis"

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Throughout July, 1974, people were paid and filmed on the grounds in front of the church at Skriaudžiai as part of the new film, *The Devil's Bride*. Many gypsies arrived and intruded everywhere. Father V. Čėsna locked the churchyard so that it would not be littered. The producers appealed to the bishop to have the pastor allow the film makers into the churchyard. The bishop granted permission. However, the film makers were not satisfied with the churchyard, but together with the district chairwoman, rudely tried to enter the church itself. The pastor announced that he would not let them in without permission from the bishop.

On June 29, the dean, the Rev. J. Uleckas, arrived, and reported verbally the opinion of the chancery that the film makers must be allowed into the church. The next day, the dean himself unlocked the church door and let in the furious film makers working on *The Devil's Bride*. This event raised much disgust among the faithful, because the church where the Blessed Sacrament is kept should not be used to film such motion pictures as *The Devil's Bride*. The atheists could have used some church that was closed and converted into a warehouse, for this filming.

Persecution of Children

Vištytis. On December 14, 1973, the Prosecutor of Vilka-
viškis, Venckevičius, arrived at the secondary school of Vištytis. The news spread among the students that the prosecutor would interrogate students who attended church. Trembling with fear, students G. Balčiūnas, Rita and Vilma Aleknavičiūtės, (Miss) O. Dulskytė, (Miss) V. Uldinskaitė, and others, went one after the other to the principal's office, where the uniformed prosecutor waited for them.

The children were asked how the pastor, Father Montvila, had prepared them for their First Communion during the summer; whether he had given them prayerbooks or catechisms; whether he had written down their names, whether he had made notes on how well they knew their catechism, etc. The prosecutor inquired which children go to serve Mass, and whether they receive anything from the pastor for this. Gintas Balčiūnas was mocked because he, a Pioneer, serves Mass. The student answered that he believes in God and no one will forbid him to go to church and serve Mass.

J. Saukaitis, hearing that the prosecutor had come to the school and would interrogate the children for going to church, fled from school.

The prosecutor asked about the students' church choir: Who sings in it, who teaches it, what hymns are sung, etc. The frightened children said that the pastor's housekeeper had talked them into joining the choir; others said that the pastor had also talked to them; still others said that they had gone on their own. If any student was silent, the teacher would come up, tap him on the chin, pull his hair, and order him to talk.

After the interrogation, each child had to sign his own statement. Third grade student V. Uldinskaitė did not sign and ran home from the office crying. Her mother came immediately to the prosecutor for an explanation of what was going on.

"Is faith in God free or forbidden?" the woman asked the prosecutor.

"Free."

"Then why interrogate our children because of their faith? We parents believe and attend church and so do our children. What does the Church teach that is so bad? There are enough hooligans, who shout nights, steal, and lead loose lives. If my girl does not go to church, she will be like them."

(Mrs.) Uldinskienė told the prosecutor in no uncertain terms how the teachers in Vištytis school mock the religious students, lower their scholastic and conduct marks, and deride them over the school public address system.

"Is that really so?" asked the prosecutor.

"Yes!" insisted Uldinskienė. "If you don't believe me, ask the students themselves."

Unfortunately, the prosecutor was not concerned with those who rudely violate the most elementary rights of man. For instance, Principal Virškus calls the students names. Once, when he met a student of the fourth grade, Dulskytė, in the school corridor, he addressed her as follows: "Well, church-mouse, how long are you going to continue to sing hymns?"

When the prosecutor finished questioning the students, he ordered the pastor and the organist (Miss) Ona Pileckaitė, to report to the prosecutor's office in Vilkaviškis on Dec. 17.

On the appointed day, Miss Pileckaitė proclaimed her *Credo* to the prosecutor: Faith is precious to the Catholics and they are obliged to obey God rather than men. The faithful worship God with prayers, hymns, and religious services. The believers are not slaves without rights over their own children. The parents had asked her, the organist, to teach the children to sing hymns, and she had done so. The believers pay their taxes; why are they disturbed at their prayers? Who had given the prosecutor the right to order people around, saying who may and who may not sing hymns, kneel at the altar, etc.?

The prosecutor became nervous.

"Don't waste my time with your tales. You see it's snowing — the roads will be blocked, and I have to go to see some lawbreakers."

The prosecutor demanded further to know how the student choir had been formed, who had invited them to sing hymns, which of the children took part in the choir, when they sang, from what texts, etc.

The organist explained that the women who sang in the choir brought their children with them, and when they asked her to teach the children a few hymns, she did so. Later some other children joined also, and thus a small children's choir was formed, which sang in church on Sundays.

The organist would not sign a statement.

The pastor, Father Montvila, did not receive a written summons; therefore he did not appear at the prosecutor's office. The District Secretary notified him to see the Vice Chairman of the District of Vilkaviškis, Urbonas, on December 19.

The Vice Chairman accused the pastor of teaching the children religion during the summer, of letting students serve at Mass, of giving children money and candy, of organizing children's choir, of

organizing processions in the streets and of collecting offerings in church.

Father Montvila explained that to teach people religious truths is the most important and direct duty of the priest, since it was commanded by Jesus Christ himself. The pastor did not defend himself for letting the children serve Mass, since it is very fitting that children worship God at the altar. If the parents and the children themselves wish to sing hymns, then he, the pastor, would not forbid it, since in the Church all the people have equal rights. He would continue to collect offerings in church, since the church is taxed heavily by the government and if there were no offerings, the churches would be closed. He does not organize any processions in the streets, but only accompanies the faithful deceased to the cemetery in accordance with the liturgy of the Church.

When he finished his questioning, Vice Chairman Urbonas sent the pastor to the prosecutor. The latter repeated the accusations and drafted a statement, but the pastor did not sign it.

Before releasing the pastor to return home, the prosecutor explained that he would send this case to higher levels for consideration.

IN SOVIET SCHOOLS

K a u n a s . September 15, 1974, Andrius Dručkus, a teacher at Jablonskis High School in Kaunas, was relieved of his duties as teacher. What was the crime of this teacher, holder of citations from the Ministry of Education, whose works on questions of pedagogy were read at republic-wide or union-wide symposiums? The main crime of Teacher Dručkus: He admitted to the school's ethnographic museum a religious folk art statue of Christ—*Rūpintojėlis*—found by one of the students at a construction excavation. The critical eye of the museum inspectors fell also on the original coffins of Darius and Girėnas (Lithuanians who flew non-stop from New York to Lithuania in 1933 only to crash to their deaths in Prussia — Trans. Note), and on a medal of Vytautas the Great (Grand Duke of Lithuania in the 14th century — Trans. Note). To these "crimes" was added the speech of Teacher Dručkus at the trial of Šarūnas Žukauskas.

The teacher characterized Šarūnas as an able and hardworking young man. The Party bureau of the school met twice and the Party bureau of the city met once, trying to formulate the dismissal of

teacher Dručkus from work. When they did not succeed in formulating the dismissal as "dismissed at the request of the collective," he was forced to work as purchasing agent, denying him even the nine weekly lessons needed to maintain tenure. Dručkus approached the Security Committee, asking for the accusations against him in writing, but he was denounced as a nationalist and accused of taking part in erecting a hill in Judrėnai in honor of Darius and Girėnas. The Professional Association of Education Employees of the Republic explained to Dručkus that he was illegally removed from his duties, but the situation remains the same to this day. Teacher Dručkus is still working as a purchasing agent, taking care of three children and his mother, just because he gave shelter to the *Rūpintojėlis* found soaking in a ditch.

Resistance by Students Against Propaganda

K a u n a s . In May, 1974, just before the anniversary of the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta (Protesting Soviet oppression — Tr. Note), a tea-party, with entertainment and dancing, was arranged for the students of medicine. A lecturer was invited, coffee was made in the kitchen of the psychiatric hospital, and food was purchased. The arrival of the academic youth was awaited in a spacious hall beneath the hospital, on Kuzma street. The host, Prof. Dr. Puras, and the lecturer came, but the students did not appear.

The professor was agitated.

"Ill get even with them..."

Even though students are not inclined to turn their backs on refreshments, this time they boycotted the affair. The plan to distract the attention of the students from the anniversary of Kalanta's death did not succeed.

* * *

V i l n i u s . In order to attract even a part of the students of the Art Institute, who show no interest in the Museum of Atheism, the museum, through the Institute's administration, announced a contest for the students to create works of art on atheistic themes. The contest was announced in the 1973/74 school year. Even though cash prizes were promised, the contest had to be extended. Later, in the

museum of atheism, a part of the works exhibited was of doubtful atheistic content.

The students' lack of interest in the museum of atheism is witnessed by a speech by V. Kojala, Secretary of the Communist Party of Vilnius, given on October 19, 1972, at the Conference of Activists in the Institutions of Higher Learning, held in Vilnius. Here is an excerpt from Kojala's speech:

"In all institutions of higher learning, a course on atheism is given. But how many students have visited the museum of atheism, for instance, in the first half of this year? From the University—one group of 18 people; from the Engineering Construction Institute—one group of 9 people; from the Pedagogic Institute—two groups, 31 people; no one from the Art Institute; only from the State Conservatory there were three groups—84 people. From all the other schools of higher learning only 58 people came.

"Such a situation is clearly abnormal. As it is, in Social Studies, comparatively few visual aids are used; why not utilize such material as is found in museums of atheism or revolution? Instruction in Social Studies is a very important link in the education of students and the Party organization of the city accords it constant attention." (LSSR Conference of Party Members of Higher Education Institutes Material, V., 1972, pages 72-73); In the same speech, Kojala stated that "in the upper schools of the city of Vilnius there are 30,000 students, including those studying by correspondence. . . In the high schools of the city there are 12,000 members of the Communist Youth League."

* * *

Šiauliai. In October, 1974, Home Room Teacher (Mrs.) Aukštikalnienė, of Grade 7B in the J. Janonis Middle School of Šiauliai, assigned (Miss) R. Vaitkutė to conduct an atheistic hour. The girl's mother found out about this compulsory assignment. She came to the teacher and asked why her daughter must conduct the class' atheistic hour.

"She is on our list of churchgoers," explained the teacher.

"We are Catholics, and my daughter will not conduct such an hour."

"If you were an old woman, I would not be surprised," spoke the teacher, "but you are a young woman and bring your children up so badly."

"What harm has my daughter done?" asked the mother. "Her conduct mark from you was very good."

"We wish all the children to be atheists, therefore atheism must be fostered in the child from the cradle on."

"No, my children will never be atheists!" declared the mother.

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P o c e l o n y s . At the beginning of the school year 1974/75, in the school at Pocelonys (*Rayon* of Alytus), the children were especially harshly persecuted for attending church.

Principal Trimbandienė, seeing a cross on the neck of 8th Grade pupil Vadeikaitė, pulled it off and warned her about it. Miss Vadeikaitė announced that she would buy five crosses and wear them anyway.

Teacher Zelnia urged Miss Vadeikaitė to join the Communist Youth League and warned that her conduct mark will be lowered for attending church.

"Think it over," spoke Teacher Želnia, "and go either to school or to church."

"I thought it over long ago," declared the student, and stopped attending school.

Eight days later the teachers sent two students to ask why Miss Vadeikaitė does not attend school. Later Teacher Želnia himself, together with Teacher (Mrs.) Zinkevičienė, called at the home of Miss Vadeikaitė and asked that the girl come to school. Presently the girl is attending school.

Miss Vadeikaitė was summoned several times to the juvenile delinquents' room of the Town of Daugai and asked why she was organizing children for a church procession.

"Are you after all abnormal, that you attend church?" the officials mocked the girl.

Teacher Jermalaitė mocked believing students for attending church: "Church mice, go say the rosary!" Teacher (Mrs.) Didžiulevičienė acted similarly.

V i š t y t i s . Towards the end of school year 1973-74, home-room teachers of the middle school of Vištytis warned the students not to take part in any religious observances during the summer—not to scatter flower petals in processions, not to sing in the choir, etc.

Teacher (Mrs.) Kanonenkienė warned, "We will get even after the summer holidays with whoever takes part in processions."

* * *

K a p s u k a s . In 1973, in the town of Kapsukas (Marijampolė) Teacher Juzė Jakelaitienė was severely reprimanded in the Party office because her son, while living with his grandmother in the country, received his First Communion.

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Raudondvaris. In 1974, Driver Puikys, residing in Raudondvaris, took his son to the Raudondvaris church at Easter. For this his wife Teacher Monika Puikienė, was sternly warned at the Education Department of Kaunas.

Kapiniškiai. Teacher (Miss) Radzevičiūtė, working at the school in the Village of Kapiniškiai (district of Varėna), attended church at Druskininkai at Christmas. For this she had to write an explanation.

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Marcinkonys. At Easter, 1974, Mrs. Ona Budėnienė, employed at the food store, attended church in Marcinkonys, *Rayon* of Varėna, together with her two children. For this, she received a strong warning from her supervisory organization, as though she had committed a great crime.

P a l a n g a . At the beginning of school year 1974-75, ^{trio} home room teacher of Palanga middle school asked nth Grade student N.: "Why don't you join the Communist Youth League?"
"I believe in God; that's why!"

* * *

K a r t e n a . In September, 1974, the leader of the Pioneers of Kartena school asked the members of the organization in the 7th Grade:

"Whoever believes in God and attends church, please stand."
The whole class, except for three students, stood up.

In 1974, in Kartena, 3000 children received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

* * *

P a l a n g a . Home Room Teacher Kusas, of the 6th Grade in the secondary school urged Gražina Narkutė to join the Pioneers,

but the girl resisted. Teacher Kusas called at Gražina's home and reproached the parents because they would not let their daughter join the Pioneers. "The Pioneers will be taken on excursions to Vilnius, Leningrad..."

"When the time comes we will show Vilnius and Leningrad to our children ourselves. We do not find the Pioneers a good example. My daughter came home crying several times, because the Pioneers made fun of her for not belonging to their organization. Besides, we are believers and are bringing up our children to be believers."

* * *

V i l n i u s . February ax, 1972, there was a meeting of the students' parents in the auditorium of Vilnius Secondary School to hear the school administration's announcement of the results of the last trimester and to consult about improving their children's progress. The principal asked J. Aničas, Ph.D., to say a few words.

The Soviet school, said Aničas, educates students faultlessly. If bad students appear, who do not study or commit various misdemeanors, the family is at fault. Poor upbringing within the family results from the fact that religious superstitions still exist there. Those superstitions are clung to by old people, especially grandmothers. They drag the children to the confessional. The children, brought up one way in school and another way at home, often choose the way of crime.

"What can you say to a grandmother who can recite for an hour the names of famous scientists who were believers and did not hide their convictions?" asked one father.

The lecturer became confused, then started to explain that it is true that there are sincerely believing scientists abroad. However, they work in their laboratories as materialists. ..

"What can you say to the grandmothers?" Aničas remembered the question and sighed, "Nothing..."

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ANSWERS TO ANONYMOUS LETTERS

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 12 published an anonymous letter, written in the name of priests of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis and directed against so-called "reactionary priests,"

together with two answers written by priests of the Diocese of Vilka-
viškis and Vilnius. Below we offer two more responses written by
priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys.

First Reply

Recalling, in the name of the only Son of God, the sacrifice of
the cross, and stressing the need for unity, you start your letter beau-
tifully. The need for unity is very vital. Your letter was read and
pondered by many priests. The general consensus is that unity should
not be sought in this way.

A reading of your letter makes clear its main purpose—not to
foster unity, but to aid Security agents in the liquidation of the
Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

It is not fair, in the name of unity, to divide priests into two
groups, and to demand condemnation of the one, while the other,
the minority group, is deemed just and wise. You picked the worst
solution to the question—not to unify but to condemn. . .

Is your boast that you carry the "burden of the day and the
heat" well founded? It is much easier to accomplish greater works
in a large parish, because it is sufficient to organize the work; in a
small parish the priest himself must do the work. Dedicated priests
are sent to smaller parishes not by the bishops or the administrators
but by direction of the civil government. If these priests have lesser
opportunities to work, that is not their fault.

After all, the renovation and maintenance of churches is only a
small part of the priest's work. That can be done by the parish coun-
cil. The main work of the priests is the creation and fostering of the
living Church. If the children in your parishes were catechised care-
fully, if First Communion was celebrated with great solemnity, if
many children and young people took part in processions, if the par-
ishioners heard vital sermons affirming strength and courage, if
there were in your parishes a vital sacramental life, then we would
acknowledge that you are an example to us. Such work, however,
earns us the name "reactionary," a title of which we should be proud,
not afraid.

You are very scandalized, as though dedicated priests acted from
the vain desire to become well-known on the radio and in the press
abroad. That is a very malicious and unfounded statement. Why not

think, in the spirit of brotherhood, that they are acting in the spirit of the Gospel: "We are merely servants. We only did what we had to do." (Lk 17, 10)

Admit it: You have insulted our brothers who, when they could not be ordained to the priesthood publicly because of persecution, nevertheless chose the way of the priesthood. To these our brothers, we sincerely say: "Always consider yourself the closest members of our priestly family." You, on the other hand, should ask the forgiveness of God and of these brothers. Then we shall believe that your quest for unity is sincere.

We have two bishops in exile: His Excellency, Bishop Julius Steponavičius ir Žagarė and His Excellency, Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius in Naujas Radviliškis. How many priests who suffered in prison camps returned unbroken and got involved in pastoral work? The more recent prisoners are:

The Rev. Šeškevičius, the Rev. Bubnys, and the Rev. Zdebskis determinedly defended the souls of children and the freedom of faith in the courts. There are many priests in Lithuania who have been slandered in the newspapers, fined, and deprived of work certificates—all of them by atheistic terminology are reactionary, and according to you, worthy of condemnation.

However, even you use the fruits of their labor and sacrifice. For instance, in 1966 Assistant Chairman Zulonas of the Executive Committee of the Region of Anykščiai called the priests of the Region together and forbade the blessing of the children on Thursday, the octave of Corpus Christi. However, the priests did not obey. The following year the service was forbidden again, but the priests again blessed the children. The following years were quiet. Now even you peacefully bless children; but remember that this was fought for, and some earned the name of reactionary priest for this.

Now lay people are being arrested and interrogated. They used to supply us with prayerbooks, catechisms and religious literature. Are you going to accuse even them of unbridled self-love? Don't your parishioners pray from their prayerbooks? Don't their children learn from their catechisms? Reject their labor—and a large parish will be left with several prayerbooks, and without any catechisms. Many are praying for these lay people, and are concerned for them—are you going to condemn them?

Let us remember the deaths of Bishop Reinys and Bishop Bori-sevičius, also the death of more than one priest in prison camp.

We honor the holy martyrs who adorned the history of the Church. We must bow our heads before strength, courage and sacrifice. We must learn from this and imitate it. Let us bow our heads to today's faithful. They do not betray or destroy the Church of Christ. Let us not be envious of the honor shown them, because that honor belongs to us all who dare to put spiritual greatness ahead of gigantic force. Poor is the nation which belittles its heroes. Such a nation cannot last. Only foreigners speaking in its name may do that. Then why should this exist in the Church of Christ?

You wrote: "It would not be so annoying if this disunity came from the atheistic side, but how can we condone fragmentation among ourselves?"

Disunity Caused by Priests Succumbing to KGB Pressure

Let us look at the reality of life with open eyes. Almost all priests were persistently approached and threatened by Security people and urged to collaborate. The duties of collaboration are known: to report what the priests discuss, plan, and do; what the attitudes of the priests and the faithful are, etc. There follow more concrete assignments and by degrees it comes to the point at which it is obligatory to perform all the assignments of Security, even to write such letters as you have written. If you work for Security, you are guaranteed a large parish, the favor of the government, and a reputation as a progressive priest who understands the spirit of the times. And if you do not work for Security? Many angry threats, angry and slanderous articles in the paper, confiscation of work certificates, forced labor in peat bogs, woods, at land drainage, construction; a small provincial parish, and the title of "reactionary."

We have been divided, and this disunity is fostered by the action of the Security agents. But that is not the main cause of this division. To our joy and happiness, many priests determinedly refused these disgusting suggestions, contrary to the spirit of Christ, and they betrayed neither themselves, nor other priests, nor the Church.

The most important reason for internal disunity was and remains some priests' weakness, fear, naivete and ambition. Some were afraid of threats, others naively believed the tales of the Security people that acting in this way will be better for themselves and for the Church. And some, to our shame, turned to a career, wishing to win and keep a higher position. The first fearful priest who signed an agreement of collaboration with Security delivered the first and the most serious blow to our unity. No betrayal or collaboration with the enemy ever created unity. The priests recruited by Security, the deepest wound of unity, forced other priests to warn their friends that these priests cannot be trusted. That is our most painful loss.

It would be possible to defend those who quietly, even if without reason, suffer because of their plight, but one cannot defend those who are proud of their betrayal.

Have there not been and are there not now those painful cases in which a priest selects a better place by discussing it with the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs? It remains for the bishop only to confirm the "appointment." Where did the "untouchables" come from who may not be appointed to smaller parishes? Certainly not from the midst of the zealous.

We firmly state that every order of the civil government to appoint this or that priest to a parish is an illegal constraint of the rights of the bishops. No priest may agree with this or use it for his benefit. Every priest protected and supported by the civil government is our shame, our misfortune, and a destroyer of our unity.

So what is left for us to do, brothers? We must free ourselves at any cost from the protection of, and collaboration with, Security. To believe that they wish the Church well would be more than naive. We have to refuse the privileges received as a result of betrayal and to stop destroying the Church with our own hands. We will not fall into the lines of the enslaved. Out of respect for urban pastors, those of large and small parishes, most of whom are good Church leaders, we invite you to love freedom, desire it, seek after it and suffer for it. We will not be mute witnesses to the death throes of the Church, but fighters for the freedom of the Church. We do not fight against the present order, but against arbitrariness; we do not demand anything but that which fully belongs to us by Natural Law, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Human Rights. You are under the very

great influence of atheists and Security people, who like to prophesy a black future for the Church if there is no collaboration with them or deference to them. Let us not be concerned for the future, since its ruler is God. The Holy Scriptures console us: "Nations pass away, but the truth of God will remain forever."

You write that there are not enough candidates for the seminary, that there was a much stricter selection of candidates this year. Should not a great deal of the blame fall on those who, "having a good understanding of the spirit of the times," removed servers from altars, children from processions, and are afraid to meet with children, waiting until they reach the age of eighteen? Would there not be more vocations from those who take an active part in services?

There were insufficient candidates this year because not all candidates were accepted. The best candidates were rejected, denying the right of a man freely to select his profession. Who did this? The Civil Government, which advertises to the world that candidates are freely chosen by the rector of the Seminary. Why blame the "reactionary priests" and the secret Seminary for Priests, most likely existing only in your imagination? We can assure you—if the further oppression of the Church brings about the necessity for a secret seminary, it will be taken care of by responsible priests. This will also be God's work, since without His call there will not be a single vocation to such a seminary.

Your emphatic request that the bishop speak from the Vatican in the terms of your letter, is very base. How can a good priest ask the bishop to join in lying propaganda, so that oppression would be clothed in the ill-fitting robe of freedom? How harshly dissonant your letter would sound after the serious, concrete and open speech of Cardinal Slypij.

We are often scourged, but let us feel our greatness. The slave who is in love with his chains cannot be called a real man. This is even more true of a priest of Christ.

(The above is condensed. — Editor of the Original)

Second Reply

On the basis of the statement in the Soviet press, that behind every anonymous letter hides either a coward or a person with a

guilty conscience, one can say the same after reading the anonymous letter written to Bishop Labukas and to other bishops and administrators.

There is almost no doubt that this is not the work of priests, but the speech of Security officials through the lips of priests. Even if we assume that this letter was written by a few priests, the conclusions remain that there is nothing priestly left in these priests. Such a priest may wear his cassock, he may conduct services, but it will be like the play-acting.

A true priest of Christ knows that he is called to work that "they all be one" (Jn 17, 21), however, that "one" requires us not to turn away from Christ but to love Him even more; not to deny the truth, but to love it and defend it.

What talk can there be about unity, which Christ so desired, when the quest for it (on the part of the government) consists of discrimination against the faithful, force, mockery, and persecution, depriving the faithful of the fundamental rights of man?

No priest nor ordinary citizen of the state would be reactionary if the state honored and conscientiously guarded the guarantee given to every citizen:

"The law guarantees to citizens of the USSR:

- a) freedom of speech
- b) freedom of the press
- c) freedom of assembly and meetings
- d) freedom of street marches and demonstrations"

(Constitution, art. 125)

Even though the state does not honor its word, no priest has incited the people by saying "Hate the Communists because they are Communists!" Conflicts arose because those, who in the name of the state had promised to honor the rights of citizens, restrain them in the roughest manner, and mock the faithful. Priests were tried for nothing but for faithfully preaching the doctrine of Christ. This they did, not in the streets or town squares, but in the churches. If the writer of the anonymous letter tries to pass over silently the cases of Father Šeškevičius, Father Zdebskis, and Father Bubnys, and if he feels that these cases are a normal part of life, then there is no doubt what kind of priesthood he is adorned with.

Restoration of Churches by the Faithful Despite Authorities

The writer of the anonymous letter would have the right to speak about a few restored churches only if they had been restored at the expense of the government and by its workers. It has not been heard that the government had allocated even one ruble from the state treasury to restore these churches. All this was done thanks only to the faithful people and dedicated priests, who had to go the way of the cross in government offices to accomplish this. It was not workers sent by the government, nor volunteers organized by the government, who unloaded bricks from wagons for the building of the church of Klaipeda, but those volunteers who loved God and in whose hearts the flame of humanity and of understanding of spiritual and national values still burned. Later these people were betrayed not by the priests, but by government officials who would not allow the faithful to gather to pray in the house of worship built by their own hands, offerings, and sweat.

Perhaps the writer of the anonymous letter would like to say in self-defense that the priests who directed the building of the church of Klaipeda broke the law. Maybe. However, this happened not because of the fault of the priests but because of defects in the social order. If there were enough of everything in the stores, no one would seek "somewhere" for a necessary item.

The writer of the anonymous letter does not wish to see or hear how the Catholic Church is being destroyed in Lithuania. He would like to represent only those who would themselves go to the enemy and say: "Give us a rope and we will hang ourselves, just so no one would know that you want to hang us, just so that this dishonor does not fall on you." He would allow himself to keep quiet always, even if the greatest wrongs were done to the Church and faithful.

However he will scream at the top of his lungs when some "progressive" is jailed abroad. Then he will take part in meetings, and talk about the infringement of human rights in capitalist countries, but he will not say one word when natural, God-given human rights, guaranteed by the Constitution itself, are most rudely trampled before his very eyes.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* is not a novel, where the imagination roams at will. It is naked facts, and even the most beautiful lying words are helpless before facts. If the facts reported in the *Chronicle* did not exist, there would be no *Chronicle*, since they do not seek to slander or degrade anyone but only to show the reality of life.

The writer of the anonymous letter would defend his position by stating that today churches are more decorated. It is too little for a real priest of Christ that his church is adorned. He wants the church to be filled with people, the faithful, especially the young. Even confiscated churches are being restored by the government. However, not one of them has been returned to the faithful, but they have been converted into museums and concert halls. Perhaps the writer of the anonymous letter would like to rejoice in the fate of the Church of St. Casimir in Vilnius, which, it is true, is restored nicely from the artistic point of view. But it was desecrated, turned into an atheistic museum. If it was permissible to found an atheistic museum, then where in Lithuania is there a church museum?

A real priest desires that the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the Constitution not exist on paper only. Not one priest has gone and stood at the school door observing which students go to it. At the same time, atheistic teachers are not ashamed to stand around the gate to the church yard or at the church door and to write down the names of students who go to church, to terrorize them later in their classrooms, lower their conduct marks, pin caricatures of believing students on the school bulletin boards, call the parents to school or to the collective farm office and threaten to take away their pasture land or not allow the use of a horse to plant potatoes, just because their children attend church.

It was not the *Chronicle*, and not allegedly reactionary priests who evoked government sanctions against priests or church restorations. Those repressions existed all the time and still exist, only the writer of the anonymous letter is trying to convince us that one must doze while the wolf tears up the sheep. It is clear from his speech to which sheepfold he belongs.

What is guaranteed to a man by Natural Law and the Constitution is naturally legal and permitted. But how is it here with us? If you wish to renovate the church—ask for a permit; if you wish to

celebrate a solemn religious feast and invite other priests—ask. If the Constitution acknowledges freedom of conscience and freedom to perform religious cults, then why do we need these permits? This reminds one of life in prison camps where a criminal takes away the glasses of a political prisoner and tells him: "If you wish to have your glasses, if you wish to see where you are going, buy them from me!" The poor prisoner buys his own glasses from the robber and he is guilty only because he is not able to defend himself.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* would certainly not be representative of the Church of our country, nor of any diocese, nor of a single person, if the events described in it were not the everyday meat of the Catholic Church of Lithuania. The *Chronicle* would certainly die of starvation if it did not contain a single true fact. Meanwhile, no one can show that the facts contained in it are untrue.

Interference with Students for Priesthood

The seminary would certainly not complain of a shortage of candidates if the Church administration were allowed to administer it on its own. It was not the Church administration which "relieved" qualified priests, prepared by scholarships and spiritual qualities, from teaching in the seminary; and it did not happen today. They were pushed into provincial corners just so that they would not have any contact with the seminary.

It should not surprise anyone that when the government poses various obstacles for key young men to attaining the priesthood directly, they will courageously and forcefully look for other ways to reach their goal and to serve the people.

Let no one restrain the young people from attending church, from fellowship with priests, from receiving necessary information about priests or the seminary, from having religious literature. Then there will be enough hearts devoted to Christ in our country.

Let them not hide the seminary from foreign visitors, who are fed bald lies to the effect that any young man may enter the seminary. Why are those who have not served in the army or those from institutions of higher learning not accepted into the seminary? Why

do they try to change the mind of a young man who wishes to enter the seminary, using all kinds of means—even slander and blackmail? Why is this young man called in by the director of the board of education, the principal, and by specially concerned Security agents? Why do some teachers or principals feel no shame in saying to such a youth: "It would be better to murder someone, or become a drunkard or thief, rather than a priest?" Why does the school administration or the Security official say not a word to the youth entering the Medical or Polytechnic Institute? After all, the seminary is not an underground school, but an openly operating teaching institution whose schedule and curriculum are well known to the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs.

Can the writer of the anonymous letter take it for a normal state of affairs that a Catholic country has not a single Catholic newspaper? Can he be satisfied with one or two prayerbooks which were published thirty years ago and are not adapted to the needs of the man of today? And where are the catechisms?

Where is the freedom of the bishops to act independently in their own dioceses? Last year our Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas cancelled the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in Alanta, Obeliai, and Joniškėlis, not because he wished to compromise himself. He did this because he was forced to by the government.

If these facts say nothing to you, the writer of the anonymous letter, or if you consider them normal in the relationship of Church and state, then your name is known to us. You are not from the sheepfold for which you allegedly care.

Christ says clearly: "Mine know me" (Jn 10, 14). Perhaps the word of Christ has lost its meaning for you? In that case, remember the words of Karl Marx: "If you want to be an animal, you can of course turn away from the suffering of mankind and care only for your own skin" (*Writings*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, vol. 31, p. 454).

The writer of the anonymous letter very much desires that Bishop Juozas Labukas speak over the Vatican radio. If the bishop could freely and in all detail show the world the circumstances of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, the way of suffering which it must travel, then the world would find out things, the hundredth part of which the *Chornicle* has not revealed.

Whoever you are, writer of the anonymous letter, whether a priest who shuts his eyes to the facts of life and divine truth, or a government personage, speaking with the lips of a priest and wishing to stir up distrust and suspicion among priests, do not forget that on the side of the Church is eternal truth—Christ—and the determination evoked by the painful reality of these days—to love God even more and to work even more eagerly in the Church of Christ.

Priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys

October, 1974.

(The above reply is condensed. — Editor)

INFORMATION OF THE CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* thanks all its known and unknown co-workers, especially those who, interrogated by Security, did not deny the truth of the facts published in the *Chronicle*.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* asks everyone to continue their active cooperation in its publication and distribution. In sending material to the *Chronicle* please write names of people, places and dates, etc. *very correctly and clearly*.

The *Chronicle* apologizes to those who sent in material which could not be used in its pages, and it reminds all that in the future, vague, unclearly written material, and material of questionable worth will not be used.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* wants facts only!

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