

"WE WILL NOT"

**CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA**

No. 11

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

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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

*Executive Director,
Lithuanian-American Catholic Services*

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA

Lithuania, 1974, No. 11

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IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL (1940-1970)

When Lithuania was occupied in 1940, the Soviet government's first priority was given to the schools, in an effort to make them atheistic.

Immediately, prayers before and after lessons were banned, and crucifixes were removed from the rooms. In one intermediate school of Panevėžys, the principal gave orders that without letting the pupils know, crucifixes should be collected from classrooms and destroyed. The pupils, however, blocked the custodian's path.

"We will not allow the crucifix to be profaned!" the pupils shouted.

"I'm only carrying out the principal's orders," the custodian explained. The pupils seized the basket in which he was collecting the crucifixes and divided them up to take home.

At the vocational school in Panevėžys the teacher ordered the girls to take down the crucifixes, but not one pupil obeyed.

"Well, you certainly are cowards!" fumed the teacher. "Suveizyte, you're a member of the Communist Youth League. Show everyone a good example. Take down the crucifixes in all rooms."

The girl blanched and began to weep. "Teacher," she pleaded, "my conscience won't let me do that."

That day no one touched the crucifixes. The next day Russian soldiers took the crucifixes down from the walls and threw them out the window into the street. People, weeping, picked the crucifixes up off the street and respectfully kissed them.

* * *

With the end of the war, prayers was again ruled out of the schools. Sometimes pupils, ignoring the prohibition, would stand up as the teacher entered and begin to pray. Many teachers "failed to notice" the children praying.

In one school the principal visited a classroom, and when she saw the children praying, gave a cry and fled from the room.

"Our principal must be possessed by the devil, since she's afraid of the cross," the pupils laughed.

As a matter of fact, the principal had until recently gone to church and had urged her pupils to go. Then she abruptly became "re-educated". Evolution is a gradual process. "It seems as though our teacher is descended from a special species of ape—the change in her was quite sudden," the pupils commented.

Not all teachers "were re-educated". In Vilnius, Principal Povi-lonis of the middle school was summoned before the Ministry of Education, where he was ordered to forbid prayer before and after school. Since the principal refused to do so, he was discharged from his duties.

* * #

"All teachers are required to be active atheists," Director Chmie-liauskas, of the Department of Education of the Region of Rokiškis, shouted to teachers gathered for a conference shortly after the war. (World War II — Translator's Note)

"Teachers who do not shake off religious superstitions will not be able to work in Soviet schools."

Persecution of teachers who were believers began. In the Region of Rokiškis alone, more than fifty teachers were discharged. The order from the Director of the Department of Education would contain the hackneyed phrase, "Dismissed for religious superstitions".

The persecution produced noble individuals, too.

"You're a good teacher. Renounce your superstitions, stop going to church, and I'll assign you to the best school in the entire region," Chmieliauskas tempted Teacher (Mrs.) Slepštienė.

"I will not sell my convictions for a mess of pottage. Without religion or church I would not be a good teacher."

Teacher Slepštienė was soon assigned to a small village school.

Some teachers, unable to put up with the pressure, changed

careers. Frequently a teacher with high qualifications would be forced to go into heavy physical work, while his or her place was taken by one who had "shaken off superstitions", even though the latter's qualifications were lower.

"Since you believe in eternal truths, you can splash around in the mud," Principal Vilkys, of the Middle School of Salantai, derided teachers working in construction.

Party functionaries berated Principal Pakrovskis of Skuodas Middle School, for greeting the local pastor.

The principal explained that a priest is a human being, worthy of respect.

"If you want to work in a Soviet school, and all the more if you want to be its administrator, give up your friendship with the priest!" shouted one official.

* * *

One teacher describes her impressions of the postwar years:

"When they took Teacher X off to Siberia, I was left to work alone. With the children, we decided to pray the 'Our Father' before school and the 'Hail Mary' after. It was unusually beautiful, and no one betrayed us.

"Once an inspector from the region came and asked the children which Soviet holidays they were familiar with.

" 'Easter and Christmas,' the children replied.

"The inspector smiled and said that the children should know the anniversary of the Revolution and May Day.

"On Sundays, we used to go with the village children to church. The school was established in a building belonging to a farmer who had been sent to Siberia.

"In the storeroom I let the village children set up an altar to Mary. Every evening during May the room would be full of people. We would all sing together in Mary's honor. However, someone reported us, and I was discharged from my position. In the record the notation could be plainly seen: 'She established a church in the school storeroom.'

"In 1951 the school at X was ordered to establish a branch of the Communist Youth League. The regional officials came. Summon-

ing the teachers one by one to the principal's office, they urged them to join the Communist Youth League.

"No one would do it. For three weeks the functionaries kept returning, and for days they would give no one any peace. They finally decided that the greatest obstacle was Teacher V. She was warned that if she refused to join the Communist Youth League, she would be discharged. Nevertheless the teachers did not waver. They considered enrollment in the Communist Youth League a betrayal and a scandal to the parents and pupils.

"In the school of Sangrūda, youngsters refusing to enroll in the Communist Youth were shut up in the school basement for three days and nights. The next morning some of the pupils 'voluntarily' joined the Communist Youth League.

"Mrs. Landsbergienė, a teacher at the Middle School of Palanga, used to go to church every Sunday. To the harassment of officials she retorted,

" 'Don't interfere in the affairs of my conscience. I am a mature person; I have a firm philosophy of life, which I will not change. If that does not suit you, you can discharge me.' "

" 'What shall we do with her?' the official asked. 'It's difficult to obtain teachers who know foreign languages so well.' "

"Teacher Landsbergienė even defended pupils who were being pressured, 'Do not persecute the children,' she would say to the other teachers, 'Let them decide for themselves whether to go to church or not.' "

* * *

At the end of August, 1952, teachers gathered for a regional conference. The speaker addressed himself mainly to the problem of religion, saying that many students go to church, etc. He reminded his listeners that there are still teachers who believe in God. One of the teachers was invited up on the stage. A deathly silence came over the auditorium, which held 300 teachers from the district.

The secretary of the Communist Youth League demanded, "Well, now, do you believe in God?"

"Yes, I believe," the teacher replied.

"Leave the conference, and pick up your papers at the Department of Education. We have no need of such teachers."

The teacher was discharged, even though she had performed her duties conscientiously.

* * *

Teacher (Miss) Lazinskaite was discharged from her position with the Telsiai Institute of Applied Arts just because she had helped decorate a church.

"Aren't you sorry that you had to suffer on account of the Church?" someone asked her.

"I don't regret it," the teacher replied, "Even though I might have to suffer for it again, I would not refuse to help the Church."

* * *

Teachers relate all sorts of experiences which they underwent when they had to collect ballots. The Saturday before elections lessons would be curtailed and extensive preparations would begin, with dancing in the evening. Elections usually fell in Lent, and the red guards would make it a point to dance, emphasizing their disregard for Lent. Some teachers would absolutely refuse to dance, while others comprised. This was their first step in conforming.

"We left at six in the morning to collect ballots," says one teacher. "There were three of us: myself, a red guard and the driver. People were still sleeping. We would knock on the door and rouse them to hurry and vote. Whether they voted or not, we had orders to mark "Yes" for everyone.

In one home, we found a sick old man.

"Vote, Dad! Stick these votes in the ballot-box," said the red guard, pushing the ballots into the patient's hand.

"Get away, you evil spirit! You see that I'm about to die, and yet you want me to sell my soul to Satan."

The guard began to explain that voting was mandatory, and besides, it was a great honor.

"They say that the rosary is the only defense against the devil," said the old man, pulling a rosary out from under his pillow, and he began to make the sign of the cross over the guard, saying, "Get back, satan!"

The guard cursed and left the old man in peace.

We drove on. Some people we visited, and some we skipped; but the ballots wound up in the ballot-box. On the lists the word "Yes" stood out.

* * *

One middle school was being visited by the Party Committee and the Department of Education. The officials dropped in on a geography class, and listened attentively to the lesson.

Afterwards, the visitor said, "Teacher, you did a good job on the lesson — we were quite pleased. However, there was no anti-religious element in your lesson. That is a great defect in your work — see that you correct it."

"What does atheism have to do with geography?" asked the surprised teacher.

The visitors called the geography teacher a retardate and reported her to the Department of Education, which ordered the school inspector to check this teacher's lessons regularly.

"Once again, there was no anti-religious content," complained the inspector during a visit, "How many times yet shall I have to visit during your lessons?"

"You can visit every day if you want," replied the teacher, "I will still not talk against religion."

* * *

In the middle school at Kaltinėnai, Teacher Lazdukas was ordered to prepare a lesson on the atheistic theme.

"You'll never get me to do it," said the teacher, who was a believer. "Even if you fire me, I will not prepare an atheistic lecture, nor will I give one."

The teacher was discharged. With a large family of eight children to support, the teacher took on physical labor. Only after a few years did he get some teaching to do in a middle school for adults.

* * *

Homeroom teachers must give an account to the Department of Education of how many Pioneers and how many Communist Youth there are in the class.

In the elementary school at Skudutiškis, in the Region of Molėtai, matters had deteriorated in this regard. Believing parents rigidly resisted and would not allow their children to join Godless organizations.

The principal accosted the daughter of the director of the dairy and the daughter of the area chairman, saying,

"Both of you must join the Communist Youth League."

"We don't want to, and we won't."

"No one cares what you want. If you don't join the Communist Youth League, we will expel you from school, threatened the principal, Miss Jackeleviciute.

The girls remained standing all day in the teachers' room. The next, it was the same thing all over again, but the pupils held firm.

"On your way home, now! And don't let me see you in school again!" screamed the principal.

The girls went home weeping.

Two weeks later, the pupils were allowed to return to school, but the terror continued.

"Join the Communist Youth League, or we'll put you out of school for good."

The girls were suspended for a week—"to think it over". They had the sympathy of schoolmates, and even the faces of some teachers showed sympathy.

When a week had gone by, the approach changed; regional Party representatives took over the threatening.

"If you don't join the Communist Youth League, we will put your parents out of work, we will not let you take the examinations, we will not give you your report," shouted the government officials.

The girls, after standing all day in the teachers' room, would not fill out the application.

In protest against such unfairness, the entire class went to church together at Easter.

"Well, you churchmice, you were in church," shouted Principal Jackeleviciute and Teacher Tropikas.

"We went!" replied all the students in chorus.

"Take your books and go home. Tomorrow, everyone come in with your parents," ordered the principal.

When the parents came in, they defended their children.

"What makes you so unreasonable?" the principal shouted at the girls.

"It's your pressuring that has made us get our backs up. You're wasting your breath; we are not about to join the Communist Youth League."

The principal, unable to control her anger, ran from the teachers'

room, while both girls went off to May devotions. The pressure had been withstood.

* * *

Teacher Buržinskas, of the Applied Arts Institute of Telšiai, coming to the dormitory after examinations, told students of the third year that they had received only a 3, and so none of them would receive a scholarship.

"If you join the Communist Youth League, we'll let you have a re-take. I'll give you three hours to think it over."

Two of the students filled out the questionnaire. Later, it became known that they had made a 4 in the examinations, and that Teacher Buržinskas had lied, hoping by deceit to enlarge the ranks of the Communist Youth.

Third-year student Marytė was summoned to the teachers' room and plied with threats to join the Communist Youth League. The girl fainted and was taken by ambulance to the hospital.

"If you joined the Communist Youth League, the other girls would join. They won't join because in your class you have influence," the teacher said to one student. "If you do not join the Communist Youth, we will cut you up in the examinations, and you will not receive your diploma. And even if you do get your diploma, you will not get a job."

The girl prayed and determined to put up with anything, but not to give in to force.

"Explain in writing why you do not join the Communist Youth League," ordered the dean.

The girl wrote:

"The Soviet Constitution gives all citizens—Party members and non-Party members—the right to education and work. Why do you teachers force me to join the Communist Youth League and threaten that I will not receive my degree or get a job? Even though I am not a member of the Communist Youth League, I know how to work and how to study well."

In the faculty meeting, after the girl's response had been considered, it was decided to suspend her stipend for three months. The girl almost starved for a time. Later, people, finding out about her difficult situation, began to help her. Three months later, she received a scholarship again and she was left in peace.

* * *

In the Middle School of Klaipėda, a first-year pupil was being pressured to join the Little Octobrists. The child began to weep.

"I want to ask my father first. If he lets me, then you can sign me up."

"Don't tell your father that you're a Little Octobrist.—He won't know and so he won't scold you."

"My father loves me and I tell him everything. If he doesn't want me to do something, I won't do it."

The next day, the child told the teacher to delete his name from the Little Octobrists, since his father did not approve of the organization. The teacher was forced to delete the boy's name.

* * *

In the Region of Skuodas, Teacher Macijauskas of the middle school at Šatės brought pupil Kušleikis to the teachers' room and pushing a pen into his hand, pressed him to fill out an application to join the Communist Youth League. The boy slipped out and ran home in tears. His father, going to the school, defended his son.

"So you told the old man about it." said Macijauskas. "Even though he is your father, you don't have to obey the old man."

"Would you like it if someone taught your children to disobey you?" the boy retorted.

Teacher (Mrs.) Benetienė badgered one sixth-grader to join the Pioneers. Unable to influence the pupil, the teacher summoned his mother.

"I am religious, I taught my son his prayers, I take him to church, and so I will never agree to let my son join the Pioneers. I will not sign over my son's soul to the devil. Do not invite me here on this matter ever again," the brave woman declared.

* * *

In the middle school of Kulautuva, pressure to join the Communist Youth League was stepped up when Principal Stropus and Associate Principal Jauniškis took over.

During 1957-58, tenth-grade pupil M. Sieravičiūtė was expelled, to intimidate the pupils. Party Secretary Strelcov of the Kaunas regional Party advised the administration to take this course of action. Only after considerable effort was the Sidaravičius girl allowed to finish middle school.

This is what Paragraph 124 of the Soviet Constitution, "The school is separated from the Church" means in practice!

Editorial Note: For security reasons, we have deleted some names of persons and places.

CASE NO. 345

The morning of July 4, 1974, security forces searched the apartment of J. Gražis, of Kaunas, who had been arrested. After lunch, the search was repeated. The following day, the search was carried out for the third time.

Even though nine months have passed since the wholesale searches and mass arrests, nevertheless, the State Security Committee, it seems, is not ready to complete its investigation, since the Chronicle continues to be published.

Various individuals whose places have been searched are being called in for interrogation. Those being interrogated are presented face-to-face with those arrested.

Conditions of those under arrest are unknown.

The Catholics of Lithuania regret that the free world is reacting so little to the arbitrariness of the security police—innocent people are suffering in prison!

ARCHDIOCESE OF VILNIUS

Vilnius

To: The Attorney General

The Chairman of the State Security Committee with the
Council of Ministers of the USSR in Moscow,

A PETITION BY VLADAS LAPIENIS,
resident of Vilnius, Dauguviečio 5-11.

On November 20, 1973, security agents under the command of Senior Lieutenant Gudas, made a search of my apartment and seized a typewriter and many old religious books. Some of them had been reproduced by typewriter.

Not all the books were listed in the record of the search, nor in the list of books seized, but just piled into a car and taken away. The bags were not sealed. I would like to remind you that the books are of cultural value and should be treated as such.

Therefore on January 4, 1974, I appealed to the Office of the Attorney General of the Lithuanian SSR, requesting that in accordance with Paragraph 24 of the Criminal Code (BPK), to make amends and to return the books to me or at least to add in a supplementary list the books which had not been listed. In this way the blatant transgression of Soviet law by the security agents would be atoned for.

However, it was all in vain. On January 14 of this year (1974), I received from the Office of the Attorney General the following letter:

"In reply to your petition of January 4, 1974, I wish to inform you that on November 20, in your apartment a search sanctioned by the Attorney General took place in connection with an interrogation being carried out in a criminal case. The question of returning literature seized at your place during the search, we will decide in the course of the interrogation."

Such a reply from the Attorney General is unsatisfactory, since it was clear even during the search that all this was being done with the agreement of the Attorney General.

I did not request this, but I declared that the security police had blatantly transgressed Paragraph 192 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR (BKP).

Such a reply suggests that the Attorney General himself is subservient to the security people, or together with them, wishes once more to deride a citizen.

If the Attorney General had the least good faith, he would have seen that the books were returned to me, or that they were included in a new list, and that I was informed.

If the Office of the Attorney General itself ignores Soviet law, how can we expect that ordinary citizens obey them? Or can it be that we have one set of legal standards on paper and another for propaganda abroad?

Paragraph No. 12 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR affirms that all citizens are equal before the law, but in daily life we see something quite different. Believers—in this case Catholics—have typewriters, books and manuscripts of a religious nature confiscated, while their apartments are subjected to search.

The atheists, meanwhile, experience none of this, have opportunity to spread their views, and have at their service the mass media of the state: the press, radio, television, film and the theater.

For old religious books, or for new ones reproduced by typewriter, Catholics are summoned before the Security Committee, interrogated, threatened or imprisoned.

For thirty years of Soviet rule in Lithuania, Catholics have not had and still do not have a single newspaper or magazine, nor may they print even one catechism.

If in the eyes of the law all are equal, as the sources of Soviet law state, then why do we Catholics have applied to us not the norm of law, but the opinions, views and verbal instructions of atheists—security officials and other government functionaries?

In the press and over radio it is constantly argued that all Soviet citizens are granted the greatest rights and freedoms. We Catholics affirm without hesitation that we don't only have no freedom of speech or press, but on the contrary, we lack the most fundamental human rights.

Our priests: Antanas Šeškevičius, Juozas Zdebskis and Prosperas Bubnys, have been sent to prison just because they dared, in the course of their direct duties, to explain to children the basics of the Catholic Faith—the catechism, while Jonas Stašaitis, Petras Plumpa, Paulius Petronis and V. Jaugelis have been arrested and are held in jail simply because they dared to reproduce prayer books.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the Soviet Union signed, has no practical effect on our lives. Catholics constantly meet with transgressions against the Soviet Constitution, which guarantees freedom of conscience, and experience constant discrimination at work, in school and other aspects of life.

I think you will agree that just as air and food are necessary for the life of a normal human being—believer or atheist—so are freedom and equality before the law, equal rights and duties necessary for all citizens.

"Without freedom of association, of the press, and of speech," taught Lenin, "all discussions about religion are lies." *Lenino Rasšai* (Lenin: Works Vol. VI, 1951, Art. *Patvaldytė svyruoja*).

If representatives of government discriminate against citizens for their religious convictions, then by that very fact they harm the entire

nation. For this turns the believers—and they are the majority—against the prevailing system.

Whoever thinks it is possible to destroy the Church and the Faithful by persecuting is sadly mistaken. Even Lenin affirmed that the dissemination of atheism in "a country where the revolution of the proletariat has triumphed" is possible not by forbidding religion (this would only evoke religious fanaticism), but by carefully demonstrating to believers the truth, and involving them in active societal life" (Article: *Mokslinė pasaulėžiūra ir ateistinis auklėjimas* — "Educational Philosophy and Atheistic Education", *Tiesa*, March, 1974.)

Life shows that the atheists, paying no attention to the instructions of Lenin, use brute force; there are indications that the number of believers, rather than decline, is growing.

The world is full of variety, and so are people. It would be wrong and inhuman to make everyone an atheist by force. Such a policy, striving to standardize human thought, to automate human behavior, is injurious to the state and to its citizens.

Increasing drunkenness, hooliganism, the break-down of families, thievery, adolescent labor camps, prisons and stockades: is not all this the result of compulsory atheism?

"Respect for the rule of law," Brezhnev told the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, "must become the conviction of every individual. This is especially true of the work of officials. Any attempts to swerve from the law, or to circumvent it, no matter how they are motivated, cannot be allowed. Nor can infringement of human rights be tolerated, nor the abridgement of civil rights. For us Communists, proponents of the most humane ideals, this is a matter of principle."

I therefore request you to instruct the law enforcement agencies of the Lithuanian SSR to remedy their transgressions against Soviet law (*LTSR BPK 192 str.: Paragraph 192 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR.*), to stop discrimination against believers, and to avoid offending the most elementary rights of humans, guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

July 12, 1974. Vladas Lapienis

I g n a l i n a

On March 28, 1974, the Executive Committee of the Region of Ignalina summoned the parish council chairpersons of all Catholic parishes in the entire region, and the chairpersons of the boards of trustees of these councils.

Those summoned were lectured for about three hours by Vice Chairman Vaitonis, of the Executive Committee, and A. Žiukas, Director of the Department of Finance.

In the beginning Vaitonis spoke of the most democratic state in the world—the Soviet Union, where all have equal rights to work, rest, freedom of conscience, of religion, the press, etc.

Having "demonstrated" to those invited that in Lithuania religion has complete freedom, Vaitonis proceeded to enumerate what is forbidden:

1. It is forbidden to prepare children for First Communion in groups. Priests have the right to examine children only singly.
2. Children may not serve at Holy Mass, sing in the church choir, or participate in processions. If children serve Mass, sing, or participate in processions, the parents shall be punished. They must remember that the children belong to the state more than to them.
"Once the child is born, he no longer yours," Vaitonis parroted.
3. Priests may be invited to religious festivals not by the pastor, but only by the parish council. Before inviting them, the vice chairperson of the Regional Executive Committee must be informed in writing; he or she will know who may be invited and who may not. Only the ecclesiastical dean of the area may attend such festivals without permission of the regional government. Priests from other regions may not be invited.
4. Undertaking even the smallest repairs to the church or other parish buildings, it is essential to obtain permission from regional headquarters. Repairs must be discussed with the Region, and not with the pastor.
5. In church, money may be collected only by a representative of the parish council. The money collected must be kept in a savings bank. A portion of the money must be given to the peace fund.
6. If someone commits suicide in a family of believers, the priest does not have the right to refuse Catholic burial.

7. Priests may not speak in their sermons of the low morale state of the people, but only about God.

8. Priests may not officiate at marriages or baptize, unless civil documents of marriage or of birth have been issued. Without such a document, even an infant in danger of death may not be baptized.

9. Believers do not have the right to collect any kind of signatures, or to complain that freedom of religion is constrained.

Executive Committee Vice Chairman Vaitonis would not allow anyone to speak. He pounded the table in anger.

The chairman of the parish council of Vosiūnai pleaded with Vaitonis, that he could not leave his children at home on Sundays, since, if they burned the house down, who would be responsible?

Vaitonis threatened that if the father took his children to church, he would be deprived of his parental rights.

"You shall not take them away, since the children are mine! First start keeping your own laws," the father replied.

The Director of the Department of Finance checked parish accounts.

In some rural areas it has become customary to issue civil birth certificates for the newly born only a few times a year. On the appointed day, the sponsors must bring the child to the district headquarters, where a name-imparting ceremony is carried out—otherwise no certificate is issued. Are Catholics going to keep their children unbaptized for several months, when their Faith obliges them to baptize a sick infant as soon as possible?

A d u t i š k i s

To: Minister of Justice of the Lithuanian SSR Arankevičius

Commissioner for Religious Affairs K. Tumėnas

The Bishops and Administrators of Lithuanian Dioceses,

A STATEMENT

The Constitution of the USSR acknowledges for all citizens the freedom of carrying out religious cults (Paragraph 124), and guarantees by law freedom of speech, of press, of association and of processions in the street (125), while the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR even provides a penalty for those who would interfere with the carrying out of religious ceremonies. Practice, however, shows something quite different.

On March 15-17, 1974, in the church at Adučiškiai, a Lenten retreat was held. These used to take place quietly even in the days of Stalin.

Immediately after the retreat, on March 20, the chairman of the Adučiškiai District summoned me to District Headquarters, wrote out a warrant for an "administrative offense", in which he accused me of transgressing on March 15-17 the second sub-paragraph of the order of May 12, 1966, by the ATP of the Lithuanian SSR.

Shortly thereafter they sent me two notifications that the Administrative Committee of the Executive Committee of the Region of Švenčionys would take up my case on March 25, and that my presence was mandatory.

Participating in the meeting were: Vice Chairman Mačionis of the Executive Committee of the Region of Švenčionys, Chief of Militia Archipov and other members of the Administrative Committee.

Mačionis accused me of transgressing sub-paragraph No. 2 of the order from the ATP of the Lithuanian SSR, dated May 12, 1955, by inviting priests to the devotions without permission of the Region. However, in his decision he wrote: "He broke the law by organizing and carrying out religious meetings." An ordinary parish retreat is seen as a meeting!

The second sub-paragraph of the order of May 12, 1966, of the ATP of the Lithuanian SSR says: "For offenses against rules set by law, organizing and carrying out religious meetings, processions and other rituals of cult..."

This sub-paragraph clearly contradicts Paragraph 125 of the Constitution of the USSR, which guarantees citizens freedom of association. In the church of Adučiškiai there were no meetings, but ordinary Lenten devotions.

In the ATP order of May 12, 1966, there is no mention of inviting priests to festivals or devotions, or of permission from the Region for priests to come. Where and by whom was the law promulgated forbidding the invitation of priests to religious festivals without permission of regional headquarters, no one ever told me.

In the meeting, having heard the accusation, I wanted to explain that it was groundless, but a militiaman taking part began to shout, "Be quiet! This is no church!"

Vice Chairman Mačionis, of the Regional Executive Committee demanded, "Tell us, did you invite some priests?"

I confirmed that I had.

Then Macionis said, "That's enough for us," while Chief of Militia Archipov threatened, "We'll take care of you!"

It is most painful that the chief of the militia does not take care of hoodlums who go about knocking over crosses and monuments in cemeteries. In our parish in 1959 they wrecked the cemetery of the Village of Davaisiai, in 1972 they knocked down an artistic wayside shrine in the cemetery of the Village of Jakeliai, which had ornamented the cemetery for centuries

One evening in October, 1973, a gang of hoodlums tore up crosses in the cemetery of Adutiškiai and caused a disturbance in the city streets with them. How many drunks and other trouble-makers there are; and yet the Chief of Militia does not worry about them, but wastes all his energy in a fight against the Church.

"We will take care of you!" It is easy to "take care" of a priest without rights who has done no wrong. Anyone has the right to calumniate and accuse him of anything, and they do not hesitate. However, no one has the right to defend the priest—this would be considered a crime.

They summoned me to the meeting, but they did not let me explain myself. What did they call me for, since they did not let me speak? This is why I am forced to write to organs of the Soviet government.

1. My priestly rights or duties I will not renounce in favor of a parish council or of the civil government.

2. I invited the priests to the retreat, since Church law and the decrees of the Synod of the Archdiocese of Vilnius oblige the pastor:

a. "Let the pastors be responsible each year for arranging a retreat of at least three days, so that the Faithful might prepare themselves for the sacraments (Par. 22:)

b. "Let the pastors see that the faithful entrusted to them prepare themselves as well as possible for Easter Communion by a retreat or by special preaching, and let them invite enough priests to hear confessions." (Par. 331)

The synodal decrees state: "*Let the pastors see that,*"—not the parish council or the civil government.

3- I invited only the kind of priests mentioned in the agreement of 1948, which the parish council of Adutiškiai signed with the Executive Committee of the Švenčioniai Region.

It is clearly stated there: "... and not to allow such ministers of cult to carry out religious ceremonies, who are not registered with the Commissioner for Religious Affairs of the Lithuanian SSR."

I invited only such as are registered. The above mentioned agreement remains in force, since the same state exists, and the same Church. The agreement cannot be unilaterally abolished or changed.

4. I invited the priests without permission, since Vice Chairman Mačionis of the Executive Committee of the Region of Švenčionys told me on July 10, 1973, "Ask, and we will give permission for two or three priests."

Could three priests take care of all the confessions we had during this year's retreat?—3105 people?

Moreover, Mačionis on November 21, 1973 said to me, "In the future the parish council shall request permission for priests to come in for religious festivals. We will grant it, but not always as many as are requested, and not always those for whom it is requested—we will send some of our own also."

Throughout the history of the Church it has been unheard that the civil authorities—and atheistic at that—should send "its own priests" to confer the sacraments on the faithful. This is the most uncouth and intolerable interference in the affairs of the Church.

In the Soviet press it is often said that the state does not interfere in the internal life of the Church. For example, see J. Aničas and J. Rimaitis: "Tarybiniai įstatymai apie religinius kultus ir sąžinės laisvę" ("Soviet Law Concerning Religious Cults and Freedom of Conscience") 1970, p. 21.

5. Bishop Motiejus Valančius in his book *Maskoliams katalikus persekiojant (Persecution of Catholics by the Muscovites)* (Kaunas, 1929, p. 39), and A. Alekna, in his *Bažnyčios Istorija (Church History)* (Tilžė, 1920, p. 223) write that the Czar had issued a ukase forbidding priests to attend religious festivals without government permission. I am sure that Lenin, in annulling the Czarist ukases did away also with this one, which is ridiculous, forbidding priests to travel to religious festivals and retreats.

During the Soviet era no one has promulgated such a law. Therefore, in inviting priests I broke no law. The whims of individual Soviet officials are not law. A law takes effect and is binding only when it has been publicly promulgated, and when it does not contravene the Constitution. Therefore, the Administrative Committee harassed me and warned me without any grounds.

In the decision of the Administrative Committee it is written that I can take this decision to the people's court. I did not. I became convinced in the past that the people's court pays no heed to any documents, not even to those which Soviet jurists have acknowledged as very serious—enough to annul the illegal confiscation of a house, which I erected next to the church in Švenčionys.

The court gave in to the whims of Soviet government organs just because I refused to become their flunky.

I respectfully request the Commissioner for Religious Affairs to annul the warning given me without any grounds, and to explain to Vice Chairman Mačionis of the Region of Švenčionys that he had no right to judge me or to warn me on the basis of the order of May 12, 1966 from the ATP of the Lithuanian SSR, since I did not transgress it.

Rev. b. Laurinavičius

Adutiškis, April 30, 1974.

V a r è n a

On April 13, 1974, during services, hoodlums threw brickbats at the church in Varėna. The militia refused to intervene, since there "was no bloodshed".

On April 20, 1974, during an atheistic evening for students, a figure of the Crucified, probably torn from a cemetery crucifix, was derided. The correspondent for the regional newspaper, *Red Flag* (May 28, 1974) rejoiced that the youth are being properly educated to ridicule religious ritual. By such "education" a child's respect for everything that is good and holy is destroyed. Will such children not become Jhmates of penal colonies?

* * *

D u b i č i a i

Chairman J. Vaicekauskas of the Executive Committee of the Dubičiai District sent Chairman Švedas, of the parish council, a communication as follows:

"On December 4, 1971, about 2 p.m. the minister of cult of your religious community, Mykolas Petravičius, without permission of the Executive Committee, accompanied to church with funeral banners through the main street of the village Jeva Raginienė, a resident of the village.

In accordance with instructions regarding application of Sub-point 6 of Point 9 of the law regulating cult, religious processions and religious ceremonies in the open air are forbidden, except for burial services in a cemetery. We therefore ask you to warn the minister of cult, Mykolas Petravičius, not to transgress the order set by law.

ARCHDIOCESE OF KAUNAS

K a u n a s

After the trial of Šarūnas Žukauskas and his companions, Security decided to take care of the remaining active ethnographers and other individuals.

Aspirant Jucevičius, who had worked on the chemistry faculty, was expelled from the Polytechnic Institute, Student Albinas Jonkus was expelled from the school of constructional technology, Albinas Jonkus, from the Institute of Medicine, Fifth-Class student Levi j a Mozerytė, and Assistant Remigijus Morkūnas, from the Dept. of Surgical Stomotology.

Sixth-class student Nijolė Muraškaitė of the Medical Institute was given a demerit for "conduct" incompatible with the ethics of a Soviet physician.

During the proceedings in the rector's office, she was accused of being a believer and going to church. Similar demerits were meted out to Sixth-Class students Virginijus Skabuiskas and Kazimieras Preikša.

Brought to trial at their places of employment were:

(Miss) Jūratė Eitniravičiūtė, of the Pramprojektas,

Eligijus Morkūnas (Museum of Folk Life),

(Mrs.) Margarita Sakalauskienė (Executive Secretary of the
Kaunas Society of Ethnography),

(Miss) Audronė Peseckaitė (Čiurlionis Museum of Art),

Vilius Semaška (radio factory),

Lukas Mackevičius (Endocrine Preparations Production),

Regimantas Kurklietis (Same).

(Mrs.) Margarita Sakalauskienė was discharged from work, and the rest were summoned before the Security Committee and pressured to sign pledges that they would not participate in anti-Soviet activities.

The above-mentioned persons were brought up before disciplinary boards at work, on the basis of written communications from the Party Committee.

Pramproject workers — ethnographers angered by the above-mentioned repressions, gathered together the citations of members of the society and gave them to the council of the City of Kaunas, saying that they were resigning from the society.

The following ethnographers were summoned before the Security Committee of Vilnius and forced to sign warnings:

Alfonsas Juška, Birutė Burauskaitė, Jonas Trinkūnas, Rimas Matulis, and Kazys Misius.

The latter was also accused of sending photographs of Lithuanian crosses abroad. According to the interrogator, it is permissible to collect pictures of crosses, but not to disseminate them.

* * *

June 14-16, 1974, a religious festival was celebrated in the Church of St. Anthony in Kaunas. The festival began on June 13 with a solemn procession. The beautiful effect was spoiled by some people making motion picture film. A panic ensued. Many did not wish to be filmed by the unknown cameramen.

The next day, the pastor, Father Pranas Šniukšta, told his parishioners:

"Four years ago, the Lithuanian Film Studios decided to make a film based on religion in Lithuania and Latvia. A Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Riga and the funeral of His Excellency, Bishop Maželis, were filmed. Then the project was halted... I was appointed responsible for the making of this film. Some bishops and I saw the finished product.

The film-makers said that the procession in St. Anthony's Parish is most beautiful and that the filming was coordinated with ecclesiastical authorities.

When the filming began, participants in the procession went into a panic, but the film studio promised that the film would not be used for the wrong purposes.

Some say, "We may never see that film, but there will be people who will."

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania seriously advises Father Šniukšta and other priests to refuse to direct atheistic propaganda films, not to write for atheistic newspapers very subjective articles, but to get back to directly priestly work.

* * *

Š i a u l i a i

March 15, 1974, workers at the Šiauliai Workshop for the Blind were herded to an atheistic lecture given by Prof. I. Zaksas, of the Kaunas Institute of Medicine.

The speaker said that false information is being disseminated abroad about alleged suppression of the religious press in Lithuania, about the punishment of innocent priests, etc. The professor mentioned that there are no candidates for the seminary at Kaunas, and that there are no restrictions on the part of the Soviet government. If it happens that one priest serves several parishes, this is simply because, due to the small number of believers, several priests are unnecessary.

After the lecture, the listeners posed a number of questions.

"I heard from the speaker today, that the atheists are the friends of the believers. I am a believer and I have taught my children to believe. The atheists of Šiauliai have guaranteed several times during their meetings, that my children shall not have access to higher education. Where is the friendship in that?," asked the laborer Šileikis.

The lecturer guaranteed that if Šileikis' children came through the examinations no worse than the others, they would surely be admitted. He knew nothing of the actions of the atheists in Šiauliai.

The worker Jurevičius likewise mentioned that he saw no friendliness on the part of the atheists. Two young men last year erected a cross on the Hill of Crosses and for this "offense" they were severely punished. V. Ivanov was expelled from music school, while Z. Mištautas was not allowed to take his state examinations.

Moreover, Mištautas was obliged to give an atheistic 'ecture on Christmas Eve. Is this not ridiculing the believer? Or is it friendship?

Professor Zaksas replied that the atheist in sending Mištautas to give an atheistic lecture acted perhaps unjustly, but the professor

had nothing to say about Mištautas' being denied opportunity to take the examinations.

Jurevičius mentioned that religious material is printed in Lithuania in very small quantities, and that it is practically unavailable. For example, the faithful would pay up to 30 rubles a copy for the "*Maldynas*" prayer book, if only they could obtain it. Jurevičius said that he had seen a copy of the *Decrees of the Second Vatican Council* only in the museum of atheism.

Director Alminas, of the Cultural Center, affirmed that he could not be a believer, because for some reason there are no miracles in our day, and everything in the past was fabricated.

The worker Jurevičius remarked that in our day too there are miracles at Lourdes and Fatima, but for lack of a religious press these facts remain unknown to many.

Professor Zaksas said that during World War II the Germans perpetrated massacres in the name of God. One worker explained that Hitler was an atheist, and that in fascists concentration camps thousands of priests were killed.

"What will the atheists do when there are no more believers left?" asked Šileikis.

After some thought, the speaker replied that atheists would combat drunkenness and other evils. To most of the workers' questions Professor Zaksas either gave no reply at all, or else offered some vague explanation.

"God's existence is proved by your own lecture," one worker concluded. The audience burst out in an ovation.

* * *

Home Room Teacher (Mrs.) Dukaitienė entered in the school records of Virginia Šileikytė: "She is under the influence of religious parents. Virginia's views coincide with the fanatical views of her parents."

* * *

On March 3, 1974, a security agent hauled Virginijus Ivanov off to the Security Committee and interrogated him about why he had told others of the interrogation in connection with the procession of the cross at the Hill of Meškuičiai, about who helped Virginijus' mother write a complaint, etc.

* * *

On February n, 1974, Teacher Gorodickis of the Šiauliai Workshop for the Blind gave an atheistic lecture, during which he ridiculed believers. He asked why believers should not be given a coffin for their birthday or name day, since they seem to desire eternal life so much.

After the lecture, the audience detained the speaker with questions and a discussion began, but the lecturer hurried out of the auditorium.

Ž a g a r è

On February 25, 1974, V. Mičiūnas, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Joniškis region, demanded to know of Father G. Gudanavičius, the pastor of Žagarė, why the pastor walked in the funeral procession and why the cross was carried in such processions, why he allowed boys to serve at Holy Mass, why he urged parents to bring their children to church, and why, during the summer of 1973, he catechized high school students.

"To catechize children," replied Father Gudanavičius, "to draw them nearer the altar, to urge parents to come to church themselves and bring their children—this is the duty of a priest. I would be a poor priest if I did not perform this duty conscientiously."

"The children belong to us and we will not give them to you," declared Mičiūnas.

"We don't ask you for the children. They belong to the parents. If the parents ask us for help, we will gladly help them to rear their children religiously," retorted the pastor of Žagarė, "As for carrying the cross in procession, that is required by liturgical procedure. Even the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, K. Tumėnas, does not object to this."

"Tumėnas is not our boss," said a regional official. He can do what he wants in Vilnius, but not here. We are in charge here... Your activities generally in Žagarė displease us. We will take more stringent measures."

"That's your business. I'm going to try to carry out my duties conscientiously."

Shortly after, the school began to persecute pupils who go to church. Teachers visited the homes, summoned parents, and tried to convince them not to allow their children to go to church. "The

children can pray at home," they said, "If they go to church, they shall be punished."

The worst to suffer were the children of the Valančius family. Genė Valančiūtė used to receive perfect marks up to the sixth grade, and annually received a citation. This year Genė again finished with perfect marks, but she did not receive a certificate of merit, and her conduct mark was just satisfactory.

Zita Valančiūtė, who studied hard and behaved in exemplary fashion, had her conduct mark lowered to "unsatisfactory".

Conscientious teachers, parents and pupils are annoyed at the conduct of eighth-grade teacher V. Maižius and of Director Stelmokas.

V o s i l i š k i s

In 1974, in Vosiliškis, eighth-grade teacher (Mrs.) Lionė Kmieliauskienė and her husband Algis Kmieliauskas, Chairman of the District of Vosiliškis, intensified their atheistic activities.

At Easter they both lurked about the churchyard, while school-children were followed by their agents, Communist Youth League member (Miss) Urbaitė and the teacher, (Miss) Vaišvilaitė. Immediately after Easter, the terrorizing of parents and children began.

District Chairman Kmieliauskas ordered members of the orchestra turn in their instruments—It seems they dared to play in church at Easter.

Pupils of the Vosiliškis elementary school were scolded for going to church, and especially for taking part in the procession. Teacher (Mrs.) Bakienė ridiculed third-grader Pesecka and his parents for going to church.

"If your mother tells you the stork brought you, are you going to believe it?" sneered Mrs. Bakienė, "But then maybe the stork did bring such an idiot?"

The Kmieliauskas couple were not satisfied with their "activity". They reported to Director Kirtiklis of the intermediate school at Grinkiškis which pupils of the upper grades, studying in Grinkiškis, took part in services at Easter. Director Kirtiklis invited the pupils to the teachers' room and forced them to write explanations of why they went to church at Easter. Eighth-grader R. Jančius was forced to re-write five times his explanation of why he served Holy Mass at Easter.

The director told eleventh-grader J. Kilbauskas, "Choose between school and church." The boy submitted his resignation from the school. Then the director promised not to harass him further and convinced him to remain in the school under his direction.

On May 14, the chief of security of the Raseiniai region came to the Grinkiškis intermediate school and tried to persuade Kilbauskas not to serve at Mass.

"You're an adult and can disregard your parents," the security agent advised.

* * *

In the village of Puodžiai, District of Vosiliškiai, an old way-side cross collapsed. Pranas Peškus prepared to set up a new one, but District Chairman Kmieliauskas informed regional authorities, who warned Peškus not to erect another cross.

"We don't pull down crosses," said Regional Vice Chairman Z. Butkus, "but if a cross falls over, it means that it has seen its day and you are not allowed to erect a new one."

On May 13, 1974, Executive Committee Vice Chairman Butkus summoned Father Jonas Survila, the pastor of Vosyliškiai, and accused him of being unruly and aggressive, because boys of the parish serve at Mass and for that reason he had been penalized. As a matter of fact, Father Survila on May 13, 1971, had to explain himself to Security Chief Gardauskas, and on July 18, 1972 he was fined 50 rubles for having children serve Mass.

Vice Chairman Butkus ordered the pastor to write an explanation of why the boys served Mass. Father Survila sent in the following explanation:

"The parents want their children to go to church instead of drinking. If I encouraged it, there would be a crowd of boys. You can ask their mothers who is doing the agitating.

"Why do I not chase the boys from the altar? I cannot drive them from the altar because, as the Lord Jesus Christ says, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them...' " (Luke 18. 16).

"Therefore, 'We must obey God rather than men.' " (Acts 5. 29).

Vice Chairman Butkus, receiving such an explanation, summoned Fr. Survila that very day to regional headquarters and fined him fifty rubles. Butkus was especially angry at the pastor for writing

that "we must obey God rather than men." This meant that he did not plan to mend his ways. Butkus warned that in the future more stringent measures would be taken, and he would not allow the pastor to act thus.

Surviliškis

Executive Committee Vice Chairman Juškevičius of the Region of Kėdainiai forbade the pastor of Surviliškis, Fr. Vytautas Užkuraitis, to visit a neighboring parish during a religious festival, to preach.

Fr. Užkuraitis informed the faithful of Surviliškis, Gudžiūnai and Šaravai of the prohibition:

"The Regional Executive Committee Vice Chairman has forbidden me from visiting neighboring parishes during a religious festival and preaching there. However, I am a priest of the Church established by Christ, and I am obliged to obey the words of the Master which say, 'Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation'. Can I disobey such a categorical command? I will therefore go to religious festivals and I will preach; I would remind those who would forbid me, of the words of Peter and John to the Jewish sanhédrin, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. . .'"

After the festival, in July, Fr. Užkuraitis was summoned before Vice Chairman Juškevičius, who began to lecture the "recalcitrant" pastor:

"Why do you disobey our instructions by going without permission to the festival and preaching there?"

"Religious festivals, devotions, and the administration of sacraments belong not to your competency, but to that of bishops and priests," the pastor of Surviliškis explained. "By what right do you interfere in the internal life of the Church, the domain of Canon Law, and prevent priests and faithful from fulfilling their religious duties? By such conduct you—not we—transgress the Constitution of the USSR and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. You officials of the Soviet administration become tools of the atheists and serve not all the citizens, but just a small group. I am deeply convinced that you, Mr. Vice Chairman, have no juridical or moral right to order priests, 'You go to the festival and preach, and you stay home.'"

"For such conduct and speech, I will take care of you!" threatened Juškevičius, "You'll come to the end of your tether..."

* * *

In Surviliškis, (Mrs.) Eidukienė and her son would go to church daily. For this the boy was ridiculed in every manner in school, and called names. The teacher Klanauskas even warned the mother, "If you continue to take the boy to church so often, we will take him away from you, and we will discharge your husband from his book-keeper's position."

DIOCESE OF PANEVĖŽYS

U t e n a

To: His Excellency the Apostolic Administrator
of the Diocese of Panevėžys,
Bishop Dr. R. Krikščiūnas

from the Dean, the Rev. J. Niurka

A STATEMENT

On March 28, 1974, in the Utena hospital I conferred the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick upon (Mrs.) Ona Katinienė. The patient, struck by an automobile, was unconscious, and the following day she died.

On March 29 I was summoned by Utena Regional Executive Committee Vice-Chairman Labanauskas and asked whether I had been to see a patient at the hospital the day before, and whether I had permission from the chief of staff.

I explained that I had been summoned by the sister of the deceased, who said that arrangements had been made with the staff, and that I would not be ejected from the hospital. I went and took care of the patient, without disturbing anyone.

The Vice-Chairman was not satisfied with my explanation and demanded a written statement besides. I felt that I was innocent, and that I had not forced my way into the hospital arbitrarily, but had only performed my priestly duties upon invitation, and so I wrote a statement.

One night I was awakened to visit the hospital, but it became clear that no arrangements had been made with the staff. I said I would wait until they went and made arrangements, but they did not return.

A few days later, during the day, I was again summoned to go to the hospital. The one asking me did not have permission of the chief of staff. He went off to get permission, but did not return.

On March 7, I told the faithful from the pulpit that we priests may visit the hospital only with permission from the chief of staff.

On April 24, (Mrs.) Agota Graužiniene, daughter of Petras, 82 years old, a resident of the village of Droničėnai, a patient at the Utena hospital, asked that a priest be called. Her children went to the doctor for permission.

"She's not weak, she doesn't need a priest... We have no separate room," the doctor explained.

This was no answer to give, since the patient was at death's door. She was taking twelve packets of oxygen daily. And at the Utena hospital, the office of the chief of staff is set aside for religious ministrations to patients. On April 25, (Mrs.) Graužinienė died without having seen a priest.

Conclusions

1. At the hospital in Utena, the faithful who are dying may not have religious ministrations, to say nothing of those who wish to make their Easter confession.

2. Of what value is the instruction to obtain the chief of staff's permission, when this is not granted?

3. It appears as though someone forbade the chief of staff to grant permissions just as they had forbidden the doctors on duty to admit the priest to visit the sick..

I request Your Excellency to contact the appropriate authorities, so that the misunderstandings which have arisen in Utena regarding this question might be resolved, and that a priest ministering to the sick would not be considered an offender.

Utena, May 9, 1974. Rev. J. Niurka

On April 15, 1974, the Executive Committee of the Utena region sent district and city executive committee chairpersons the following message:

"Together with member (Name) of the Control Commission on observance of laws regarding cult, attached to the executive committee of the Utena region, please carry out the following assignments by the date set:

"1. By April 19, send the regional executive committee a schedule of religious festivals and holy days for 1974 at (name of church), according to the following form:

Line No.

Name of holy day or Festival

Date

Priests the executive organ plans to invite as help.

(Signed) Chairman of the Executive Committee
of the Religious Community

"Note:

"1. This calendar of religious holy days is to be made up and signed by the executive committee of the religious group.

"2. Make three copies of the calendar: one copy to remain with the executive committee for your records, one copy to be submitted to Member (Name) of the Control Commission for Observance of the Laws... The original should come to me.

"3. On work days fixed religious feasts may be celebrated only after work hours. For this reason, in the column marked 'Date', the hour is to be indicated at which the holy day or festival begins. Transferrable feasts should be moved to the closest Sunday.

"4. It must be explained to the chairpersons of the executive organs that once the schedule of festivals is compiled, it will be necessary in the future also to apply in writing before each festival or religious holiday to the regional executive committee, for permission to invite one or two priests from neighboring parishes to help out, since the desire for such does not yet mean that the regional executive committee agrees, or grants permission. In a word, it is necessary to receive permission to invite a priest from a neighboring parish to help out, as per established procedure.

"2. The agreements with religious groups for further use of the house of prayer and the religious inventory until May 10 are to be renewed.

"The agreements are to be drawn up in triplicate: One copy remains in the files of the executive organ of the religious groups, while the second and third copies should be sent to the regional executive committee (One of these will be sent to the Religious Committee in Vilnius).

"If there is any question about the filling out of the agreement, please consult with me.

"3. Together with the agreements are to be sent the inventories of religious articles (These are compiled and signed by the executive organ of the religious group) according to the following form:

Religious objects, turned over without charge to the religious community of (Name).

Inventory No.
Name of Article and Description
Material
Size or Weight
Value
Remarks.

.....President of the Religious Community of

"4. The committees of twenty, the executive organs of religious groups, and their boards of trustees are to be reviewed, and where necessary, complemented. Efforts should be made to include loyal persons in those lists. Those who have been on trial, have been exiled or are otherwise reactionary should be removed.

"From among the committees of twenty is to be chosen the executive organ consisting of three persons (chairperson, secretary, treasurer) and the board of trustees, also consisting of three people (chairperson and two members).

"You are asked to complete conscientiously and punctually the tasks indicated.

"Enclosures: 1. Explanation of the procedure for applying the laws regarding cult; 2. Three copies of the agreement form.

"Signed by the vice-chairperson of the executive committee of the Utena regional DZDT."

Editorial note: Similar communications were received by executive committees of all districts and cities in Lithuania.

B i r ž a i

On June 12, 1974, Canon Antanas Misevičius was summoned by Executive Committee Vice-Chairperson (Miss) Steckaitė of the Region

of Biržai to explain how he dared to preside at the funeral of Mrs. Stiklerienė, the mother of an atheist son.

Canon Misevičius in June, at the request of relatives, presided at the funeral of the mother of teacher Stikleris, of Pabiržė, an ardent atheist. He had previously administered the sacraments to her on several occasions. In her illness, the mother was in the care not of the atheist son, but of her daughter.

Vice-Chairperson Steckaitė warned Canon Misevičius not to commit such an "offense" in the future, lest she take appropriate measures.

DIOCESE OF TELŠIAI

Šilalė

In March, 1974, the assistant of the parish of Šilalė, Father Antanas Šeškevičius, sent the Commissioner for Religious Affairs several statements. Following are some thoughts from those statements:

1. "The pastor of Kvėdarna invited me to participate actively in Lenten devotions June 5-6, 1974. Vice-Chairman Jankus of the Šilalė Executive Committee crossed my name out, and allowed the pastor to invite just one priest. Why this discrimination? Last year on the same occasion five priests working full-time were hardly able to serve the faithful. What are two priests going to do? Vice-Chairman Jankus ought to show some consideration for Soviet citizens who make use of the religious freedom proclaimed in the Soviet Constitution.

"Will the behavior of Jankus not result in priests ceasing to request his permission, as priests elsewhere have done? Why go back to the long-forgotten times of the Czar and Muraviov? (Notorious Governor-General of Lithuania in Czarist times — Tr. Note) Is this not digging a grave for Communism itself?

2. "On March 15, 1974, Canon Valančius and I were summoned by Executive Committee Vice-Chairman Jankus of Šilalė. Arriving, we found a representative of the security police.

Vice-Chairman Jankus and the security agent began to threaten me with imprisonment, because after all the penalties I am still recalcitrant and refuse to obey the law. I told them I am ready to go and die in a Communist prison.

"I asked them to show me which law I am breaking, but not one of them deigned to do so. Vice-Chairman Jankus rudely accused

me, saying that he would no longer waste words with me, but take action.

"I therefore request your assistance, that I not be subject to discrimination or calumny, but that I be treated like a human being."

DIOCESE OF VILKAVIŠKIS

Plutiškės

To the Ministry of Education of the Lithuanian SSR,
A Petition from the Executive Committee of the
Catholic Parish of Plutiškės

On May 5, 1974, during a religious festival, in the course of devotions, J. Jakštas, principal of the intermediate school of Plutiškės, burst into the churchyard, and by his aggressive behavior harassed the faithful. Without a police representative and unbeknownst to our executive committee, he made a search of the belfry and the church vestibule.

Immediately after Jakštas' departure, a group of pupils from the intermediate school of Plutiškės forced their way into the churchyard and began seizing rosaries and other religious articles from some old ladies. From one they even seized her money. An uproar ensued, and the youths were expelled from the churchyard. Then, causing a disturbance in the street, they began to throw stones at those praying in the churchyard. (Mrs.) Deltuvienė, an elderly lady, received a sharp blow from a rock.

Apparently the youths must have been instructed by someone, since they never used to behave this way before. It should be noted that it is not the first time Principal Jakštas has behaved in such a fashion.

We request the Ministry of Education to reprimand Principal Jakštas, since his behavior does not bring honor upon the Soviet school system, nor upon the ideal of the upright Soviet citizen.

Plutiškės, May 10, 1974.

At the end of July, 1974, Vice Chairman Liolys of the Region of Kapsukas berated the chairman of the Plutiškės parish council for writing the complaint. He scolded him because the parish council had gone over his head to the Ministry.

"In the future, you shall come only to me," Liolys concluded.

DIOCESE OF KAIŠIADORIAI

Molėtai

On April 14, 1974, at Easter, detectives visited all churches in the Region of Molėtai to observe which school children go to church. The teachers, informed which pupils had attended church, began to visit their homes and to browbeat the parents because their children go to church.

Calling upon Antanas Paulauskas they scolded him because his eleventh-grade daughter had been in church. They threatened another eleventh-grader that they would give him a poor recommendation, so that he would not be able to enter any institution of higher learning.

"Then I'll apply to the seminary; they'll accept me!" the student shot back.

With the resistance of the parents, the fanaticism of the atheistic teachers has waned a bit.

Bagaslaviškis

In the Region of Bagaslaviškis, Principal (Mrs.) Sviderskienė of the intermediate school warned her pupils on Good Friday not to go to church during Holy Week. If anyone were to go, the parents would be punished with a fine. The following day, she repeated her order that at Easter, not one pupil should go to church.

At Easter the principal watched the participants in the services from the window of teacher Aldona Černauskaitė's apartment. Among them were many school children. After Easter, the principal ordered all pupils who had been to church to bring in their parents.

When the parents had assembled, they were warned that their children's deportment marks would suffer if they went to church. Some of the parents, e.g., (Mrs.) F. Jablonskienė, (Mrs.) L. Strazdienė, (Mrs.) V. Balandienė, (Mrs.) E. Miliauskienė, and (Mrs.) Paukštienė were terrorized for several hours each. The pupils who had been to church suffered no less.

* * *

On May 3, 1974, Jonas Gatelis was being buried in Bagaslaviškis; his son attended the intermediate school in this town. The students, having accompanied the deceased as far as the church, were forced to wait outside during the services because the principal, (Mrs.) A. Sviderskienė would not allow them into church.

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