



CHRONICLE OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN LITHUANIA  
No. 22

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**A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original,  
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA NR. 22  
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights  
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today**

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**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF LITHUANIA**

Because the Soviet press is the concern of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (KP CK), we wish to direct the attention of the KP CK to the articles of Assistant Professor J. Aničius, a doctoral candidate in history, published by the Lithuanian Soviet press this year. A variety of newspapers has printed his articles on laws concerning religious practice and freedom of conscience. These articles contain much obvious sophistry and many untruths.

1. Aničius' article "Freedom of Conscience" states that the bourgeoisie have never formally endorsed freedom of anti-religious beliefs.

Bourgeois countries do not formally endorse the freedom of anti-religious beliefs, because that is a self-evident requirement, such as eating, washing, and the like. Does any country in existence outlaw the atheist press or place restrictions on atheistic, so-called "progressive" organizations?

2. In this same article Aničius states that bourgeois countries "have a one-sided interpretation of freedom of conscience, as the freedom to profess a religion . . . Bourgeois Lithuania (pre-World War II) defended the rights of its believing citizens . . . however, it did not guarantee all citizens, including non-believers, freedom of conscience."

There is much more "one-sidedness" in Lithuania today than there was before the war. At that time both the religious believers and the atheists could express and propagate their beliefs, while today only atheists have that right.

In pre-war Lithuania, atheists could occupy high positions. For example, the rector of the agricultural academy from 1926-34 and minister of education 1934-39 was J. Tomkūnas; the representative of the bourgeois government of Lithuania to London in 1919, rector of the University of Kaunas, 1929-33, and Minister of Education, June 15, 1926 to December 17, 1926, was J. Čepinskis. There was a host of professors: Vl. Dubas, Bl. Lašas, P. Avižonis, T. Ivanauskas, and others.

Junior college students used history manuals prepared by the atheist Viparis and J. Norkus.

Atheistic organizations were operative: **Kultūra**, (Culture), **Lietuvių kultūros švietimo draugija** (Lithuanian Cultural Education Society), and **"Laisvamųjų etinės kultūros draugija**, (Ethical Cultural Society of Free-Thinkers).

Atheistic periodicals were published: *Laisvoji mintis* (Free Thought), *Laisvamanis* (The Freethinker), *Kultūra* (Culture), *Vaga* (The Furrow), *Lietuvos Žinios* (The Lithuanian News), *Laikas* (Time), *Lietuvos Ūkininkas* (The Lithuanian Farmer), *Moksleivis* (The Student), *Moksleivių Varpai* (Student Bells), etc.

Many atheistic books were published. Atheistic teachers were organized in the **Lietuvos mokytojų profesinė sąjunga** (The Professional Association of Lithuanian Teachers), which had its own publication, *Mokykla ir gyvenimas* (The School and Life). Some atheists even had their own cemeteries.

One of the undersigned had three teachers who would not make the sign of the cross in class at prayer times, and one classmate who did not study religion, since his parents had indicated that they did not want their child to be a believer. And this was considered a normal thing, at which no one was surprised.

If only the faithful today had even a modicum of the freedoms which the atheists had in pre-war Lithuania!

3. In the above-mentioned article, Aničas writes that in the concept of "freedom of conscience", as it is understood by the Communists, is included "equal rights for citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation".

This is all very beautiful, but it is not so in fact. Why is the majority of religious practices carried out secretly? It means that

the people involved feel the threat of unpleasantness. This is some good mark for socialistic "humanism and freedom of conscience and religion". Why, in meetings, in a "cultured fashion", "without offending religious feelings", are those who have not yet shaken off "religious superstitions" discussed? Why do teachers have to submit written explanations for practicing religion?

For according to international law, which is valid also in our country, "each person has the right to profess his religion and convictions individually, as well as together with others, publicly or privately to carry out religious worship, religious services". (*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, UNO, December 16, 1966).

Why is one for "religious affiliation" discharged from work? E.g., the teacher (Mrs.) Brilienė in Vilkaviškis or the Chairman of the communal farm in Miroslav. Why are those children who go to church the object of ridicule in school, and why are caricatures of them drawn in wall-newspapers? Why is a domestic who works in a priest's home denied the right to a pension if she takes part in religious activity? Why is a group of believers unable to organize excursions, to get a bus? After all, believers participate equally with atheists in production—why then are they considered step-children?

We have the right only to believe, but, not the right to express our belief, or to fulfill religious duties. In the words of Aničas, "complete freedom of conscience consists of every citizen's right to develop a materialistic world-view, to be guided by it without interference, and also to propagate atheistic views." This is one-sided freedom, incomplete freedom, if believers do not have the right to develop their religious world-view. They do not have books, religious instruction is forbidden. They are unable to spread religious views. This is incompatible with international law, which allows one "to hold opinions without interference . . . to . . . receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, orally, in writing or in print. . ." (*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, UN, December 16, 1966.) In this regard, believers do not have equal rights with the atheists.

4. In his article, "How a Religious Community is Organized and Operates", Aničas writes that the State does not interfere in the religious life of the religious community and that the believers themselves have the right to decide all questions touching on the fulfillment of religious requirements.

Those are empty words. Why are children forbidden to participate in processions, or to serve at Holy Mass, if the believers them-

selves—the parents and their children—wish it so? It is forbidden, even though there is no law against it. Why, at funerals, are the children of believers, when they come as an organized group, at the death of a classmate or of anyone near and dear to them, not allowed to remain in church, but must remain outside, even in the rain or snow? Why are others forbidden to teach them religion, when the parents themselves are unable to do so? Why are the faithful unable to obtain prayer-books, catechisms, rosaries, etc., why are these things taken away from those who sell them? Why can the faithful not have enough priests — Why is their preparation restricted, and the number of seminarians limited? This is gross interference in internal affairs, and it is interference with the fulfillment of religious requirements.

5. In the same article, Aničas writes that in Lithuania during the past few years "quite a bit of religious literature" has been prepared, "which the state publishing house has published."

"Quite a bit"? Priest have received just one copy each of the *Decrees of Vatican II*. Of the New Testament, and the Psalter, medium-sized parishes received barely ten copies; of the prayer-book — the rare parishioner received one. Can these publications satisfy the requirements of the faithful? In the meantime atheistic publications are printed in huge quantities (about 50 thousand copies of *Zuikių Pasakas, The Stories of the Rabbits*)"

Aničas writes that other religious publications have been released. What are these others? There have never been any!

6. Aničas remarks that private material assistance is forbidden, since that "insults the dignity of citizens". (Ibid.)

This is discrimination against the faithful, and demeaning to them, when mutual help funds are otherwise allowed (e.g., within the framework of professional associations), and mutual assistance is encouraged: Students are taught to be altruistic, and office directors are berated for insensitivity and lack of humaneness. Regardless of state social security, there are nevertheless people who need assistance: neglected old people, the sick, and others. Elsewhere citizens freely dispose of their savings; why must this be forbidden among us believers?

7. In his article, "Ministers of Cult—for Religious Need", Aničas writes that a priest cannot be a member of the executive body of a religious community.

This is discrimination against the priest as a Soviet citizen. He is forbidden to concern himself with the repair of buildings of the cult.

And why not? After all, he sometimes has more time and skill. The members of the community are burdened with various jobs as it is, and besides, no one will release them from production for church affairs.

8. In the aforementioned article, Aničas writes that "the sphere of activities for a clergyman is the dwelling of the faithful of the community under his care and the premises of the appropriate house of prayer."

As a matter of fact this is so, but there are cases when he must also work in another parish. Canon Law obliges priests to help one another. This cooperation among us the civil government restricts. This is an intolerable interference in the internal affairs of the Church. If it is no offense when a militiaman helps capture a thief outside his own precinct, when the physician gives help to a patient outside his own district, if voluntary assistance is practiced to get crops in, then why should a priest wishing to invite clergy help, in order to serve the faithful more expeditiously, have to request permission of the civil government?

9. Aničas writes that "It is not allowed to use means not a part of cult, to satisfy the religious requirements of the faithful or to activate their religious life." (Same source).

What means, — concretely?

Here the faithful are objects of discrimination — they are treated differently from the atheists. The latter can, by all means carry on "their own activities", while the faithful have none of those means. Here the atheists speak for all. Nevertheless the state is made up not just of atheists, but also in great majority, of the faithful. Among us there is just a handful of atheists, but they try by force to foist their views on others: In this case their voice does not represent justice.

10. Aničas writes that "in limiting the activities of a clergymen," there is a desire to guard the public and the State from harm (Ibid.)

It would be interesting to know from what harm? Perhaps so that families might be stronger, that there might be fewer crimes, that there be less drinking and more conscientious work?

11. In his article, "For the Younger Generation, a Scientific Worldview", Aničas writes that the "compulsory education of children in a religious spirit is an anti-humanistic phenomenon".

Is the compulsory teaching of atheism, without the permission of the parents moreover, a humanistic phenomenon?

How can it be an anti-humanistic phenomenon, if the highest government of our country has signed a convention in which the right of parents is acknowledged, to educate their children according to their own beliefs (**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, UN December 16, 1966)? This "international covenant" demands that the parents' rights be respected. But the affirmation that parents have no right to rear their children religiously is a mockery of the parents' rights, trampling them! This right, to rear one's children according to one's beliefs, has been acknowledged by all nations since the most ancient times.

The **Convention on War Against Discrimination in the Field of Education** (UN, 1962) says that it is wrong to foist on children beliefs which are contrary to the beliefs of the parents. Among us, however, the children of believers are forced to become atheists. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which the leaders of the Soviet Union also signed, states that "parents have a prior right to chose the kind of education which shall be given to their children.", but Aničas denies that with his arguments. This is **the greatest inhumanity**. The teaching of Docent J. Aničas reflects the attitudes of the days of slavery, when the parents were not acknowledged to have any rights over their children.

The spirit of this convention is guaranteed by **The Foundations of the Laws Concerning the People's Education**, which the Supreme Soviet of the USSR confirmed July 19, 1973. There the 65th paragraph states: "If by an international treaty, or by international agreement, in which the USSR is party, regulations are established, different from those which the laws of the people's education of the USSR and of the Soviet republics foresee, the norms of the international treaty or the international agreement shall apply."

12. Aničas affirms that religion can be taught privately.

This was Lenin's idea. According to him, religion is not to be taught in public school as a required subject, but one can teach it on one's own outside the confines of the school.. (This is the practice in people's democracies.) However, this idea of Lenin is distorted among us—the decree of January, 23, 1918, which says, "Citizens may teach and study religion privately", is not followed. The decree sounds as though it has no restrictions, but our "democratic" laws have restricted it: The parents alone may teach religion,—no one else. Our parents are allowed to engage a music teacher for their child, or a mathematics teacher, but they may not engage a teacher of religion. On other points, too, the mind of

Lenin is not adhered to. For example, Lenin required that nowhere in one's documents should be characterizations "believer" or "non-believer" be used, but today among us the student completing school has written in his records that he is a believer. In our circumstances, this means discrimination: obstacles are thrown up to higher studies.

13. Equally drastic is the ban on juveniles actively participating in religious services. (Ibid.)

No laws mention this. Children from their baptism already belong to the community of the faithful. Canon law in this regard does not divide the faithful into adults and juveniles. Here the civil government grossly interferes in the private life of the faithful and transgresses the rights of believers to participate in religious ceremonies. Juveniles cannot be such only in the eyes of the executive organ of the community, if from the moment of baptism they are members of the Catholic Church: They receive certain sacraments, they are buried with religious services.

14. Aničas writes that parents teaching their children religion abuse their authority, that this goes against the public interest, that the law has not conferred such rights, that the family's policies must agree with school policy . . . and that the state does not prevent parents from teaching their children religion. (Ibid.)

Here Aničas abandons all logic: If there is no conflict, then why the need to conform? If the Constitution of the country declares freedom of religion, then how are the parents abusing it, how are they going against the public interest? If Soviet law obliges parents to conform training in the family with the atheistic school, then what remains of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of conscience and of religion?

Here it is not the parents who abuse their rights, but the government, which historically was formed later than the family. Parents of their nature have certain inalienable rights, which no one may abuse, not even the government—otherwise it would be tyrannical. Abuses of this kind have been seen in recent history: German Fascism used to draft children into the *Hitlerjugend* against the wishes of the parents, and used to rear them atheistically and chauvinistically. . .

In the latest international accord, at Helsinki, the participants also committed themselves to respect freedom of religion and of conscience, without any discrimination. However, the laws governing religion in our country, as explained by J. Aničas, are an overt discrimination against the faithful. Lenin somewhere wrote

that in czarist times "the church was in feudal dependence on the state" (Vol. X. 1952. p. 65), "that there were shameful laws against people of faiths other than the Orthodox" (Vol. VI, p. 364). It is the same now: The Church is not separated from the state, but subject to it; only those who profess atheism enjoy freedom; shameful regulations restrict the religious life of the faithful in various ways.

It is the sad truth that the writings of Docent J. Aničas, a candidate for the doctorate in history, regarding "freedom" of religion and conscience are quite far from the truth. We therefore request the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania to see that the various decisions and regulations contrary to freedom of conscience and of religion be abrogated, and that the Catholics of Lithuania be guaranteed the right to take advantage of those rights and privileges which are guaranteed by international agreement and the Constitution of the land.

Copies of this document have been sent to:

1. The Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian S.S.R.
2. The Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R.
3. The Praesidium of the Academy of Science of the Lithuanian S.S.R.
4. The Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs, of the Lithuanian S.S.R.
5. The Chancery of the Archdiocese of Vilnius.

October 4, 1975

Priests of the Archdiocese of Vilnius:

The Rev. B. Laurinavičius, Rev. A. Simonaitis, Rev. A. Petronis, Rev. K. Garuckas, Rev. V. Černiauskas, Rev. K. Žemėnas, Rev. J. Balčiūnas, Rev. C. Taraškevičius, Rev. J. Jardelis, Rev. B. Jaura, Rev. M. Petravičius, Rev. D. Valiukonis, Rev. D. Puidokas, Rev. J. Kutka, Rev. N. Norkūnas, Rev. D. Valančiauskas, Rev. J. Slėnys, Rev. J. Baltušis, Rev. A. Kanišauskas, Rev. A. Merkys, Rev. A. Ulickas, Rev. K. Valeikis, Rev. S. Tumaitis, Rev. J. Vaitonis, Rev. I. Jakutis, Rev. A. Mačiulis, Rev. P. Jankus, Rev. A. Keina, Rev. J. Lauriūnas, Rev. S. Valiukėnas, Rev. K. Pukėnas.

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH AT TAURAGNAI

Tauragnai lies in an area of forests, lakes, hills and castle ruins in eastern Lithuania along the Tauragnai and Labe Lakes, in the *Rayon* of Utena.

The last church of Tauragnai was cruciform, with a single tower. Externally, it was simple in appearance, but inside it was ornate, and had five altars. The procession especially was rich and interesting. The history of this church ended July 1, 1944, when German planes set the church and other town buildings afire.

After the fire, the rectory was left, and next to it the parish hall, in which a church was set up. Its over-all length was 21 meters, its width 13 m. and its height 4 m. The building was really small. It could not accomodate the faithful for services. During the principal Mass in the summer the churchyard used to be full.

On feast-days, the local atheists, with the permission of the *Rayon* of Utena used to disturb services with various songs and music over loudspeakers from the nearby house of culture. The activities of the atheists, encouraged by the government and the press, became obnoxious. They were most unhappy with the presence of a house of prayer in the center of town, visited by large numbers of the faithful, including men and youth. On the evening of April 30, 1967, the parish hall, where the temporary church was housed, was set afire. The cause of the fire was unknown. Government officials said that the reason was that the wiring in the church was defective. However, there were people present at the time of the fire, who called attention to the fuses in the meter. They were working. Moreover, the fire quickly engulfed the entire structure, as though it had been somehow fueled.

Most probably on purpose the fire engines were summoned only after the building had burned down. At the start of the fire, many people gathered quickly to salvage church furnishings, but the pastor was absent and there was no one to organize the efforts. An interesting fact was that one atheist and some of his friends hampered the rescue efforts. In the burning church, an altercation took place. Believers beat the atheist for interfering with the salvaging of the church furnishings and liturgical robes from the burning church. Some valuable things were destroyed: Church vestments, pictures and all the stations of cross.

Shortly after the fire, Rugienis, the deputy of the Council on Religious Affairs, arrived in Tauragnai. He promised the people that

they would be allowed to build a new church, and he suggested that temporarily they make use of a chapel in the cemetery. The chapel had been in disuse for many years. When the local committee had confiscated the cemetery from the church, the pastor of the parish had no longer been able to take care of the chapel, and the local authorities did not concern themselves about it. Hence its stone walls had cracks large enough for birds to get through the openings. Its length was 6 meters, its width, 3.5 meters, and its height, 3 meters. The Blessed Sacrament was taken to this chapel and reposed in a wooden box. An altar was improvised and services took place in the chapel.

Immediately after the fire, the pastor, Canon Misevičius, wrote to the diocesan chancery that on account of old age, he was unable to concern himself with the construction of a new church and asked to be transferred elsewhere. For a time, Deputy Rugienis did not allow the diocesan chancery to transfer the pastor of Tauragnai or to appoint one who could direct the construction of a new church.

An engineer-architect in Tauragnai promised to draw up blueprints for the new church. When the blueprints were finished, they were submitted to Deputy Rugienis. His response was,— "There can be no talk of building a large church. You may build only an addition to the cemetery chapel, no larger than one hundred meters square."

The men of the Tauragnai parish council journeyed regularly to Vilnius, visiting various offices. They presented five petitions: To the Administration for Museums and the Preservation of Cultural monuments, to the State Committee for Construction, the Utena *Rayon* Division of the militia, to the Insurance Inspectors of the *Rayon* of Utena, and to the Committee of the District of Tauragnai.

Finally, in the beginning of September, a new pastor, Father Inkratas, was appointed to Tauragnai.

In the parish rumors spread that the church had been burned down by atheists, and that now they were interfering with the construction of the new church.

When the new pastor arrived, the militia of the *Rayon* of Utena warned him to stop looking for culprits in the Tauragnai church fire.

The new pastor of Tauragnai and the chairman of the parish council, Mackevičius, visited Deputy Rugienis. The latter forbade the pastor to concern himself with the construction of the church or to

collect donations for that purpose, since this was solely the affair of the parishioners.

A few men began to fashion beams for a storage shed which they were planning to erect in a corner of the cemetery. The following day, *rayon* authorities through the local authorities forbade construction of the storage shed.

At the end of September, Chairman Mackevičius of the parish council submitted to Rugienis a third plan for an addition to the cemetery chapel, since the first two plans had been rejected. Rugienis promised to approve the third plan once it was drawn up in proper fashion. When the engineer-architect had completed the plans, the leaders of the *Rayon* of Utena began to object to the construction in the cemetery.

In the middle of October the first communique from Rugienis was received, in which he blamed the parish council for going unnecessarily to the State Committee for Construction. Further the deputy stated that the plans submitted for approval were incomplete, that it would be necessary to supply complete technical data.

At the beginning of October a petition was submitted to the electric networks to supply the cemetery chapel with electricity. At the end of the month, the electricians connected temporary lines to the cemetery, but the local committee would not allow the lines to be connected to the chapel. The pastor spoke about the connection of electricity to the chapel with Vice Chairman Labanauskas of the *Rayon* Executive Committee. The latter promised not to interfere with electricians. At the end of November the pastor for the nth time went to Utena to engage the electricians, but they excused themselves, saying that they had no time. In the middle of December the electricians from Utena submitted the plans for the electrification of the chapel, but they did not begin work, saying that they had no poles.

Even though Vice Chairman Labanauskas of the Executive Committee had promised the pastor not to interfere with the electricians; nevertheless, the entire time, the electricians were forbidden to go to Tauragnai.

In the beginning of March of 1968, the electricians erected the poles in the cemetery. Then the demand was made, "We will connect electricity to the chapel only on condition that the parishioners pay all expenses for lighting the cemetery." Finally, after six months had passed, the petition was granted to connect electricity to the chapel.

In the beginning of February the Deputy promised Mackevičius to approve the plans for the addition to the chapel. The people went to work to clear the ground for the construction of the annex to the chapel. Several scores of men met and some old headstones in the cemetery were removed.

On May 31, the pastor and Chairman Mackevičius of the parish council were summoned to the offices of the Tauragnai District. There Vice Chairman Labanauskas of the Executive Committee harshly scolded them, saying that they were damaging the cemetery. He pretended to have forgotten that in March he himself had advised them to clear a place for the construction by removing from the site a few tombstones. The vice chairman threatened to bring the matter to court. Labanauskas told them to forget about building in the cemetery, and advised them to find a house in town and to request permission of the *rayon* to locate the church in this house. Immediately the *rayon* officials summoned the parish council of Tauragnai and indicated to them which house could be bought, instructing them to go immediately to discuss the matter with Rugienis.

When the men from the parish council visited the Deputy, he promised to allow them to erect an extension to the chapel in the cemetery.

On September 10, the parish council of Tauragnai was summoned to Utena. There they were received by Deputy Rugienis and Labanauskas. Afterwards, they all came to Tauragnai. Here they were told what house they would be able to purchase and given permission to set up the church there.

The house was very inconveniently located, about 3 km. from the cemetery. There were very few believers in that neighborhood, since 3 km away was the boundary of the Parish of Daunoriai.

A consultation of the parish council took place. Everyone was annoyed at the arbitrariness of the government, its dishonesty and with the new proposal. Some men went to talk with the father of the owner of the above-mentioned house. The owner was a teacher somewhere. The father relayed the daughter's price — 10,000 rubles. This was just one more instance in which atheists ridiculed believers: The house was worth 3,000 rubles.

Not only were the faithful disappointed, but the members of the parish council saw that they are powerless to overcome the obstacles posed by the government. Mackevičius announced that he was resigning as chairman of the parish council.

A new chairman, Musteikis, was elected. Everyone understood that the government was purposely presenting all kinds of difficulties, and that it would really not allow the church to be erected. Preparations were made to pass another winter in the chapel.

On September 18, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers was sent a request to allow construction of the church of Tauragnai on the site of the old church which had been destroyed. The petition carried over 1300 signatures.

The new chairman of the parish council visited Vilnius many times and went to various agencies. One time Deputy Rugienis reprimanded the chairman and ordered him not to seek permission to build a church. He was very annoyed about the new request by the people of Tauragnai, carrying the signatures of many faithful.

On January 10, several scores of the inhabitants of Tauragnai went to Vilnius and demanded permission to erect a church. That large group of men and women went from Deputy Rugienis to the offices of the Supreme Soviet. This action on the part of these brave people gave the effort new momentum. The officials began to speak politely, since they feared similar delegations of people would be repeated to various agencies.

Exactly a month later Vice Chairman Labanauskas of the Executive Committee summoned the parish council of Tauragnai and announced that Musteikis was being removed from duties as council chairman. Once more the chairman would have to be Mackevičius. The Vice Chairman rebuked them for their group visit to Vilnius and threatened them with a criminal court case.

Someone suggested that the people of Tauragnai could purchase a suitable house in some village and move it to Tauragnai after having conferred with the *rayon* authorities.

A large old house was found in the Village of Priepala. It was necessary to purchase it and to move it. Repeated overtures were made to the insurance inspectors to have the insurance for the burned-down church paid to the parish of Tauragnai. Funds were needed to purchase the house and for other construction outlays. However, the Insurance Inspector's Office of the *Rayon* of Utena remained silent. A petition was written to the Ministry of Finance concerning the payment of the insurance, which the Finance Division of Utena could not pay the church without informing the ministry. The Ministry of Finance said in writing that it was the business of the *rayon* administration. In a meeting of

the *rayon* administration it was decided that the 5,540 rubles insurance for the burned down church had to be used for road construction. Thus ended the lengthy negotiations over payment of the insurance. Once again the Communists showed that they are not only heedless of believers, but even of their own laws! Atheism is above everything!

It was necessary to pay 2000 rubles for the house (17 m.x6.17 m.) in the Village of Priepala.

On April 7, the *rayon* administration set aside Lot No. 20 next to the Tauragnai cemetery for the house-church. Various obstacles were still posed. Only after six weeks were the documents received from the architect, because it was necessary to get signatures from five agencies, which constantly procrastinated, in an effort to please the *rayon* government.

A tractor was hired to level the plot for the house. The tractor had not finished its work when an order was received forbidding the use of communal farm equipment and it became necessary to do the leveling with shovels.

The atheists of Tauragnai asked the *rayon* administration to come and inspect the new construction.

Once again there was a great problem about transportation for the stones and the dismantled house. However, late at night occasional trucks brought the stones. In the early days of June, the pouring of the foundation began. Two laborers brought a electric cement mixer, but the informers were at work. They reported it to the *rayon*. A militiaman arrived and threatened jail for "stealing" the cement mixer. The mixer in question had been lying unused near a pig-farm.

As the work of pouring the foundation of the church neared the end, a dozen or so men were involved. Word was received that a complaint had been sent to the *rayon* that many workers were employed in the construction. Labanauskas came and found on the site a carpenter with two old men helping him. He strictly forbade the taking on of any workers for the project. If communal farm workers wanted to help they could work only Sundays. But on Sundays no one worked on the project.

An architect had been assigned to oversee the construction, but he did not show up even once. The *rayon* government forbade him. All the measurements had to be made by the pastor with the foreman. The foreman was seventy years old, assisted by other elderly pensioners. Only on Saturday evenings would

younger men and women show up to help.

Several weeks later, a new complaint reached the *rayon*: young men were working on the project. After that officials came daily to see who was working on the construction of the church. They always found a few old men working, whom it was impossible to reprimand or to fine.

The shingles, the paneling for the walls and the ceiling, and the flooring were obtained from Riga. As construction of the church was being completed, vacationing students showed up from somewhere. They offered to decorate the church. When their services were not accepted, the artists left discontented. That same day four candelabra were stolen from the cemetery chapel. This was the vengeful work of the rejected artists, for they were the only ones loitering about the cemetery that day.

In August, Rugienis' assistant came and ordered the parish books and records of all income and expenses be taken to Utena the next day.

In three months the building was erected to accommodate the church. Private electricians installed the electrical wiring in the church. Journeys began, lasting a month and a half, before permission was obtained to bring in the electric lines and to connect them.

It seems that the *rayon* administration, atheists, took great pleasure in posing all the obstacles they could think up for the faithful. Especially annoying was the nit-picking of the fire-prevention bureau.

On the eve of the Feast of the Holy Rosary, October 11, the dedication of the church took place. It was carried out by the dean of Utena. About four hundred people gathered for the festival. The faithful were in a great holiday mood, understandable only to those who for two years had put up with the various results of the fire and the repression by the *rayon* government. In the cemetery chapel, there used to be indescribable misery, since only a few score people could fit in the chapel. It used to be so crowded that one could not move one's arms. Those in the chapel considered themselves fortunate, because they did not have to put up with summer heat or rain outside, or the cold or damp of winter. Throughout those two years or more the people came to services in very great numbers.

On October 12, 1969, the Feast of the Holy Rosary was celebrated in the new church. About 2,500 people poured in. *Rayon* officials allowed only two priests to be invited. The building was too

small; there was no way for all the faithful to be accommodated.

The exterior of the church is indistinguishable from a residence, because the government warned, "It will go badly, and you will regret it, if you try to enlarge the house when you buy it and transfer it to Tauragnai."

Before Christmas the pastor applied to the Executive Committee of Utena for permission to build a rectory in Tauragnai. After a month, the communal farm of Tauragnai decided to assign the pastor a lot for construction of a rectory. In February, the Notary of Utena confirmed plans for the proposed residence and the agreement with the communal farm.

In May a hired excavator dug the basement of the house. Simultaneously, some men were pouring the foundation for a proposed little belfry, for which the *rayon* had not issued a building permit. When the belfry had been constructed in two days, and the bells had been hung, once again a complaint summoned Labauskas from Utena. He scolded the pastor for unauthorized construction, and the following day sent the militia to ascertain where building materials for the belfry had been obtained. Fortunately, he could not find anything to object to, since most of the beams were charred, and it was obvious that they were remnants of the burned-down church.

The next day, an order was received from the *rayon* to halt construction of the pastor's house. Later the reason was explained: The house was being built by the parish, and communal farm workers were helping in the work. Such construction is forbidden by Deputy Rugienis.

A few days later, Chairman Triukas of the Tauragnai Communal Farm announced that the lot assigned to the pastor had to be returned to the communal farm, and he would be reimbursed for the foundation which had been poured and the basement, according to expert estimates. At the area soviet a sales contract was drafted, according to which they were supposed to reimburse the pastor, Father Inkratas, costs incurred pouring the foundation and basement, according to official estimates. Here again Soviet officials showed their true face: They paid only a third of the damages.

In connection with the construction of the belfry, a militiaman arrived and interrogated the workers in an effort to find out who had organized its construction. They coerced the pastor to explain where the building materials had been obtained, who had delivered them, and where they had been purchased. But the records were

in order. Later it became clear that the *rayon* had sent a militiaman to find gaps in the records, so that they might confiscate the newly erected church, as had been done in Klaipėda: There they had made a newly erected church into a philharmonic hall, calumniated priests in the press, and put them in prison.

In 1971, the new deputy for religious affairs, Tumėnas, promised to allow the pastor to build himself a home. The government of Utena, through the chairperson of the *rayon*, announced that the pastor would have a lot assigned to him. When the meeting of the administration of the communal farm agreed to give the pastor a lot, the government of the *rayon* demanded that the lot be given to the pastor as far as possible from the church.

The pastor, lives in a private home he rents not far from the church (about 1.5 km.).

### NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

**Šiauliai.** On March 17, 1976, at 8:30 P.M. a fire was discovered in the front tower of the Church of St. George, in Šiauliai. The fire department and militia of the City of Šiauliai were summoned. Some of the firemen were inebriated; they worked without enthusiasm or organization; when the faithful asked them to get on with the work of putting out the fire, they would reply with sarcastic and unprintable remarks.

With the tower blazing, they misdirected the stream from the fire-hose. When the people asked them to aim at the fire, the firemen sarcastically explained, "We can't pour water on the belfry, — it might melt the bells."

Their sarcastic comments could be heard to the effect that the bells would soon be falling. Once the small belfry had collapsed, the larger one came down soon after. Even though many fire engines had answered the call, only one engine was operating, and its hoses were perforated. The water flowed more on the ground than on the fire. In the street, the following engines stood by idle: LIZ 34-13; LII 4-50; 99-19-29; 27-82.

Those standing further off could see clearly how the flames were approaching the larger belfry. When the people asked the firefighters to cut off the advance of the blaze, the latter threatened to have the complainers arrested.

When the flames had enveloped most of the church, at 9 P.M. a

military firefighters' unit was summoned. The firefighters from Šiauliai, although doing nothing, did not wish to turn over the task of fighting the fire to the soldiers. They ordered the military detachment to withdraw 200 meters from the church.

Only when the faithful asked repeatedly, if it were possible for the military detachment to replace the city firemen and to get on seriously with the task of extinguishing the fire. Thanks to the military, the fire was extinguished, the altars were saved and the large belfry survived.

The Šiauliai newspaper announced that the church caught fire because of bad furnaces, even though that day the stoves of the church had not been lit. The people do not doubt that the church was set afire by people of bad will.

### Šlavantai

To the Attorney General of the Lithuanian S.S.R.  
Copy to His Excellency, Bishop Liudas Povilonis  
A Statement by The Rev. Juozas Zdebskis,  
Son of Vincas, Residing in Šlavantai, *Rayon of Lazdijai*

Early in the morning of March 10, 1976, in my "Žiguli" automobile, LIG 77-21, I was driving with the invalid (Miss) Z. Medonaitė, a resident of the Village of Gudeliai, *Rayon of Lazdijai*, to Vilnius, accompanied by her father, Jonas Medonas. Also accompanying us was Citizen Jonas Stašaitis, residing at Vilniaus 7, in Vilnius-Salininkai.

As we entered Vilnius on the Minsk Highway, at approximately 10 a.m., we were detained by an agent of the Department of Motor Vehicles. (When we asked his name, he introduced himself as "Jurevich".) He claimed that I was intoxicated, and ordered me to accompany him to the psychiatric hospital on Vasaros Gatvė, to determine the degree of intoxication.

There a doctor (who never told us her name) took my pulse, told me to walk across the room, had me breathe into a glass of reddish liquid, and recorded that I was intoxicated. I appealed to the chief of staff of the aforementioned hospital, demanding that an analysis of my blood be made. The chief of staff telephoned someone, giving them my name, and then categorically refused to do a blood analysis, on the grounds that a couple of hours had already gone by, and the test would be inconclusive.

They demanded that I leave my automobile in Department of Motor Vehicles yard on Kosciusko Gatvė, took my driver's license, and told me to reclaim my auto at 5 p.m.

I have never been intoxicated in my life. As a priest, I crusade against excessive drinking. That day, I had not even offered Mass, during which the priest consumes a few grams of dry grape wine. The aforesaid passengers are my witnesses that we left at dawn, and had not stopped anywhere along the way. The aforesaid Stašaitis had eaten breakfast with me. He can testify that neither that morning nor the evening before this incident had we consumed any alcoholic beverages. How could the medical examination indicate intoxication?

I have been driving since 1953, and not one auto inspector has ever told me, "You are intoxicated!" If it was immediately obvious to the Department of Motor Vehicles agent that I was intoxicated, then how was it that this was not noticed by the family of the patient, when they allowed their daughter to be driven by an "intoxicated" driver?

How is one to understand this incident? Why did the Department of Motor Vehicles have to sequester my automobile for several hours? Why was it necessary to "make a priest drunk"? Was it merely a case of incompetence on the part of the officials or was it necessary for atheistic propaganda? Why did the chief of staff of the psychiatric hospital refuse to perform a blood test to determine intoxication? The aforesaid invalid was forced to sit until procedures were completed, since she is unable to walk.

News of the aforesaid incident spread in a strange manner. Acquaintances in Kaunas and Vilnius greet me with a smile as "the new drunkard", knowing that in twenty-four years of my career, there has not been a single person who has ever seen me drink.

In the name of justice I request that this incident be investigated, and that you direct that such ridicule of citizens not be repeated. I also request that my driver's license which was taken from me without grounds, be returned to me.

Šlavantai, March 26, 1976

Rev. Juozas Zdebskis

**A Letter to the Bishop**

Your Excellency,

On the night of February 17, 1976, at about 11 p.m., while while walking in the churchyard, I noticed two strange men (one tall and the other somewhat smaller), who were smoking and, walking briskly, turned into the hospital yard, which serves also as the rectory yard. The hospital is the former rectory, just a few steps from the churchyard.

At first I thought that the men were hurrying on some serious matter to the hospital. However, they passed the hospital doors and hurried on to the rectory. Immediately, I thought that the object of their nocturnal visit was the rectory. I hurried after them. At that moment Nurse (Mrs.) Sofija Mikelioniene, who when she noticed them standing between the rectory and the hospital, inquired, "What are you boys waiting for?"

Receiving no answer from them, the nurse hurried to the doctor, whose apartment is on the northern side of the sanctuary. Our paths crossed. I inquired who the men were and what they wanted. She showed me that they were standing at the end of the yard. I turned to go in their direction. Seeing me, they set off. (The next morning the footprints of two people could be distinguished on the spot, and a cigarette butt was found. The footprints were identical with those near the church.)

I became suspicious of the two individuals. After waiting briefly, I went around the hospital and up the street a short way, looked about the square on the other side of the church, the bus stop one hundred meters from the church, and then returned through the churchyard, checking the main doors and the sacristy door. When I returned to the rectory, it was 11:45.

On February 18, 1976, at 8 o'clock in the morning, I went to unlock the church. Hardly had I opened the first door to the sacristy (which is not kept locked), than I immediately caught the odor of smoke and smoldering. I was surprised, since there had been no services the evening before, which would have required incense. I tried to place the key in the lock, but I was unsuccessful. Only then did I notice that the door lock had been damaged. Then I saw the doors smoking, a fire smoldering, and underfoot the seared implements of the crime: a crow-bar and a drill.

Understanding that there had been an attempt to perpetrate a vile crime, I carefully looked around. Not far from the steps which lead to the sacristy the snow was trampled (the footprints were identical to those beyond the hospital). The footprints near the church led from the south side of a small gate. The culprits had taken a rake from a lumber pile by the churchyard, and had dragged it over the snow, apparently in an attempt to cover up their tracks. We later found it nowhere. Perhaps it has been used to build the fire at the sacristy, and it was burned at that time.

Not far from the lumber, in the snow lay a liter-size container, like a milk bottle. When the militia officials arrived and investigated, it appeared that it had contained combustible liquid: kerosene or gasoline. Also found among the footprints was a small square fob on a plastic chain, probably from the keys to a small automobile. On the fob was the name "RYGA". From the scene of the crime footprints led to the main gates of the churchyard, and beyond that along the street towards Veisėjai. Especially clear was one set of footprints, those of large shoes.

After this preliminary investigation, I telephoned the local deputy of the militia in Liepalingis and asked him to come and look over the scene of the crime. Deputy of Militia Julius Milius informed the internal affairs division of the *Rayon* of Lazdijai about the incident and came over himself to stand guard until higher officials arrived. The burned floor smoldered the whole time, until internal affairs workers arrived from the *rayon*. The latter once more carefully inspected everything: They took charge of the implements of the crime, photographed and took imprints of the footprints in the snow. They wrote up a report which I and two witnesses signed: Jonas Čiurlionis and Antanas Kvietkauskas.

It seems that, the crime is all the greater, since its true purpose was not to break in, but to burn down the church. For breaking in, the crow-bar with which they damaged the door-jamb and wall would have sufficed. Also, the drill could have served to enter. But why was the combustible liquid needed? Having failed to break into the church, they poured it over the door and ignited it. The culprits hoped that this would set the door afire. Inside, near the door was a wardrobe for liturgical vestments, and right next to the door hung a cassock intended for visiting clergy. Not much was needed for the sacristy to catch fire from these articles, and from here the whole church would have caught fire.

The culprits made one mistake: They closed the first unlocked

door of the sacristy. Or rather, it shut itself. But even so, a great part of the door was burned from the bottom, the wooden floor was badly burned, near the door.

If they had broken in, the culprits would probably have soaked the liturgical vestments or the altar cloths and then the entire church would have been swallowed in flames momentarily. And that was at midnight, when everyone was asleep.

Why were the implements of crime left behind: the crowbar and the drill? This could have happened for one of two reasons. Either some passerby frightened them off, since the hospital is nearby, and it often happens that emergency patients are brought in, or often the doctor is summoned to a patient. Or, when the culprits poured out the incendiary fuel, it suddenly caught fire, and there was no possibility of picking up the tools.

Hence, this crime is serious on account of its far-reaching implications. Your Excellency, please give your attention to this matter and inform the appropriate government agencies.

Very respectfully yours,

Liepalingis, February 22, 1976

Father K. Ambrasas

## Šakiai

To: The Faculty of the Lukšiai Middle School

Copies to: 1. The Education Ministry of the Lithuanian S.S.R.

2. Šakiai Rayon Department of Public Education

3. Department of Public Education Vice-President  
(Mrs.) D. Noreikienė of the Šakiai Rayon Executive Committee

### An Open Letter

Eighteen years ago I graduated from Lukšiai Middle School. Quite some time has passed, but my ties with the school have not been and will never be severed. They will never be severed because school accounts for many of the memories in a person's life. During the years of attendance, the school becomes like a second home. Perhaps that is why one wants to daydream and talk about it and be proud of it. On the other hand, it is very painful to hear anything derogatory about it. One yearns to hear only very good responses about the hallowed

halls and expects its teachers to be shining examples. Unfortunately, the bright memory of one's school is occasionally clouded over.

More than ten years ago atheistic education took over Lukšiai Middle School under the guise of cultural extra-curricular activity. As a result both pupils and parents have suffered sorely. Because of their religious beliefs they have been put down, mocked, and discriminated against. No longer able to tolerate the teachers' tactless and coarse behavior, the parents in 1972 sent a collective complaint to the Attorney General of the Lithuania S.S.R., bearing fourteen signatures. After this complaint the persecution of believing pupils seemed to abate slightly for a while; at least there were no obvious incidents. But in 1975 the forceful atheistic education of pupils erupted again. This time it was especially marked by its tactless and unprofessional methods.

At the beginning of the school year a drive for obligatory subscriptions to atheist newspapers was organized (we have no others). When a pupil in 10B, Rolandas Tamulevičius, refused to subscribe to an atheist paper, his homeroom teacher, Mrs. Sakalauskienė, wanting to mock him painfully asked, "Then perhaps we should order a prayerbook for you?" Everyone knows that we have no prayerbooks to be ordered or bought.

On Dec. 25, 1975, the girls of the Class 10 brought a Christmas tree to school and decorated it in the classroom. On the blackboard they wrote the greeting "Merry Christmas!" During the first two periods the teachers ordered the class monitors to erase the greeting and discard the tree. The monitors would erase the greeting, but the tree remained. The third period teacher was the principal, B. Urbonas. Upon entering the classroom he became angry and sullen. He forced monitor Jonas Pranaitis to erase the words from the blackboard and to throw the nicely decorated tree into the garbage can. After that began interrogations with threats, coarse rebukes, shameless mockery and threats. They continued through the entire class period. As if that wasn't enough, the interrogation and threats continued, with interruptions, over the next three days. During that time pupils were called individually from their classrooms to the principal's office. About half of the class was called out. Questioning of some pupils dragged on for several class periods. Although there was no physical punishment, pupils were threatened with failing grades, expulsion from school, police involvement, etc.

News of this incident has spread well beyond the boundaries of the *rayon*. Not only the victimized pupils and their parents, but

the general public too is scandalized by the principal's behavior.

They are scandalized because by his behavior Principal B. Urbonas has violated: 1) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2) The 1975 accords of the 35 participating countries at the Helsinki Conference, 3) the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. and 4) pedagogical principles.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, states: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right allows . . . freedom to study religion, officiate and participate in religious ceremonies." (par. 18) "Every person has the right to freedom of his beliefs and the expression of them; this right allows the freedom to hold to one's beliefs and to freely seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas by any means . . ." (par. 19) "Education should be directed to total character development and respect for basic human rights. Education must aid mutual understanding, friendship between nations, races and religious groups, with the goal of preserving peace . . ." (par. 26)

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pupils have the right to believe, to freely study religion, freely express their beliefs, freely practice and disseminate them; but these rights are not recognized by anyone at Lukšiai Middle Middle School. I wonder, how is this justified? Perhaps B. Urbonas does not consider his pupils as human, since he denies them basic human rights?

At the Helsinki Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which took place on July 30 and the first days of August in 1976, it was decided: The participating nations pledge to honor human rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion and beliefs, regardless of race, sex, language or religion . . . participating nations recognize and pledge to honor the individual's right to profess his religion or beliefs privately or collectively, according to the dictates of his own conscience." (Final Act, VII). This "Final Act" was signed by representatives of 35 heads of state, including the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, L. Brezhnev.

The Agreements are very attractive and humane, but the administration of the Lukšiai Middle School is not abiding by them. I wonder how they are contributing to the preservation of total peace in Europe and the entire world?

The Soviet Constitution guarantees to all citizens freedom of

conscience; that is, the right of every citizen to profess any religion, the right to participate in cult services, and equality of citizens, regardless of religious affiliation.

Why do the Lukšiai Middle School teachers not abide by these laws? Perhaps they do not consider themselves citizens of the Soviet Union or have become accustomed to considering what the laws state as one matter, but actual behavior as another matter?

Finally on August 26, 1975, prior to the new school year, a regional teachers' conference was held at Šakiai. Present was a representative from Vilnius, A. Sinkevičius. Among other things, he spoke about the need for teachers to exercise tact in dealing with pupils and their parents. The speaker warned that all sorts of incidents and indiscretions become widely known and news even reaches other countries and scandalizes people.

Although little time has passed since the aforementioned conference, the administration of the Lukšiai Middle School has already forgotten the suggestions.

As a former pupil of B. Urbonas, I am reluctant to speak negatively about him. I respect Mr. Urbonas for his mathematical knowledge. I am grateful that he was my teacher. When the idea to write this letter first came to me, I procrastinated, wavered, and thought a great deal. A chance happening aided me in making a decision: on one television program a speaker quoted the words of R. Eberhardt: "Do not fear your enemies—at worst they can murder you. Do not fear your friends—at worst they can betray you. Rather fear the non-involved—they do not murder or betray, but it is with their approval that betrayal and murder exist in this world." It was then that I concluded I could no longer remain non-involved.

Wishing to remain objective, I will not rely on my own intelligence but will borrow from pedagogical literature. In the Jan. 31, 1968 issue of *The Soviet Teacher* (*Tarybinis mokytojas*), a publication of the Lithuanian S.S.R. Educational Ministry, there is an article about the teacher's authority. I wonder what Principal B. Urbonas has to say about himself in this regard? If he wants to be objective, he will have to admit that he violated pedagogical principles. First of all, he did not maintain pedagogical tact, considered the pupils delinquents because of their Christmas tree, focused on trivia, raised unnecessary commotion, and built a mountain out of a mole hill.

In reality the pupils are not guilty of anything. After all, is the decoration of a Christmas tree and the writing of a greeting a

crime? Was it worth three days of interrogation, missed classes, threats of expulsion and police involvement?

If this is being done, where is the declared freedom of conscience and religion? Why then are paragraphs guaranteeing freedom of conscience written into the Constitution; why are Universal Declarations of Human Rights ratified? Why the Helsinki Accords; why the attractive words of propaganda in the press?

The pupils and their parents who are being persecuted for their beliefs wish that all these nice agreements would not only be ratified and publicized, but also honored. Otherwise, the statements about freedom, equality, happiness and satisfaction are just empty words.

Today some think that the easiest way is to punish, but it should be realized that the easiest way is not always the best.

Enthusiastically embracing and upholding what is beautiful and good, equally enthusiastically that which is bad should be despised. Despised and actively opposed. Opposed for the sake of our future.

Former pupil, Gvidenas Dovydaitis

Šakiai, Jan. 30, 1976

(The letter has been condensed — Ed.)

## Vajosiškis

To the Editors of *Tiesa*

My son Vilius was killed in 1971 while serving in the army. His company commander allowed me to bring my son's body back to Vajosiškis and to bury him as I wished. An officer and two soldiers accompanied the body. Local Soviet officials began coercing me to bury my son without church services, stating that otherwise I would be sorry. They demanded this several times. They did not consider my grief at losing a twenty-year old son.

When I refused to give in, and buried my son with church services, everybody turned away from me. There was no orchestra, no salute; the collective farm did not participate, even though my son had worked there as a tractor driver and chauffeur before serving in the army. The school interfered with the burial services of its former pupil. The principal forbade his pupils to participate in the funeral and herded them into the hall. Those who were carrying wreaths in the procession were directed to the hall by

frantic teachers. And so they expressed their contempt for a fallen soldier, because he was being buried with church services.

In September of this year the fence on my son's grave was broken, and crucifixes were torn off. It appears that this was a carry-over of the mood from my son's funeral—to desecrate his grave because he was religiously buried because the graves were vandalized by pupils of the Vajosiškis Grammar School. That was admitted by one of the participants, Vaidas Saladžius.

On November 5 I contacted the Zarasai *Rayon* police regarding this matter. The police responded on November 17 by Document Nr. 34 stating: "Regarding the pupils of the Vajosiškis Grammar School: K.P. Bagdonavičius, A.K. Gerasimov, and B. J. Juodvalkis, related to the tearing of crucifixes from the gravestones in Vajosiškis cemetery, information has been obtained and sent for deliberations to their respective classrooms. As to the breakage of the fence alleged in your report, we have no suspects."

From this response one can assume that the fence around the grave will not be replaced. Even though B. Saladžius stated that it was broken by A. Gerasimov, K. Bagdonavičius, B. Juodvalkis and A. Vaivada. There are no plans to repair the vandalized gravestones. The principal of Vajosiškis School, J. Kuolas, tries to shake off the responsibility, and frequently he just laughs when reminded that the ruined gravestones have yet to be replaced.

V. Saladžius and (Mrs.) T. Sakalauskienė showed Principal J. Kuolis a whole storage room of vandalized crucifixes hidden in the cemetery. The aforesaid students tore those figures off with pliers and pieces of iron torn from the fence around my son's grave. The crucifixes were apparently being collected to be sold. Why do they refuse to find out the culprits? They are the guiltiest; why are they being protected?

What am I to do? Should I appeal to the commander of the army unit in which my son served? Or somewhere else, that the memory of my soldier-son would not be insulted?

(Mrs.) Z. Medinienė  
A Soldier's Mother

*Rayon* of Zarasai  
Vajosiškis Post Office  
Pūsliai

December, 1975

Vilnius

In a niche outside the wall of the Church of the Immaculate Conception (in Žvėrynas) stood a statue of the Virgin Mary. The people loved it; they would decorate it with flowers and pray before it constantly.

During the night of December 31, 1975, New Year's Eve, unknown culprits broke the statue in half and knocked off its hands.

Vilnius. February 3-6, 1976, representatives of Propaganda and Agitation Sections from all *rayons* and some teachers met in Vilnius. During the seminar, the talk was about propaganda work, atheistic lectures were delivered (Aničas and others were among the speakers). In the course of these it was stated that the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* is edited by Bishop Julius Steponavičius, residing in Žagarė, that some issues of the publication are not reactionary, that in Lithuania only a small edition of the *Chronicle* is published, that it is sent to Poland, where it is reproduced and sent abroad.

The majority of the priests remains loyal. In the seminary in Kaunas there are fifty seminarians; about five men are ordained annually, while in the same period about seventeen priests die. In the near future, priests will have to serve two parishes each.

In Lithuania there are about 1500 religious sisters. The sisters work mostly as nurses and help to see that the patients receive the sacraments. There are no sisters in the villages. The sisters also teach the children prayers and catechism. If you ask a young child who taught him or her the catechism, and they should answer, "Sister," know that it was a nun.

If after the war physicians were for the most part atheists, today there are religious believers among the doctors.

Šumskas (*Rayon* of Vilnius)

In February of 1976 the District Chairman summoned the pensioner invalid Zigmās Podverskis, who was working as a sacristan for the church in Šumskas, and demanded that he give up his work at

the church, or otherwise his son, who lived separately and served as secretary of the Party organization at the local soviet farm would be discharged from work, along with the son's wife—a teacher with a high degree of training.

**Švenčionėliai.** October 3, 1975. In the Village of Švenčionėliai, Vytautas Ivonis, a worker and a Communist, aid. His wife arranged with the pastor of Švenčionėliai to have the deceased buried October 6. Attending the funeral were the brothers of the deceased, bitter Communists. One of them was the secretary of the Malėtai *Rayon* Party Committee. They decided that their brother had to be buried without the Church, according to the Communist ritual.

They therefore approached the Secretary of the Party of Švenčionėliai *Rayon*, (Miss) Purvenckaitė, to assist them. She directed them to Vice President Mačionis of the *rayon* executive committee. Thus, at 10 a.m. on the day of the funeral, Mačionis summoned the pastor of Švenčionėliai, Father Baltušis, and asked,

"Do you know who it is that you are burying today?"

"Yes, I know."

"But he was a Communist, and therefore an atheist, so that he cannot be buried with the rites of the Church."

"What kind of an atheist was he, if he was married in church, had his children baptized, and went to confession. I cannot refuse to bury him."

"But you must find a pretext not to bury him. Do you understand?"

"Not at all. Everything has been prepared in church and agreed to."

The brothers, discovering that the deceased was being buried with Catholic rites, refused to hire an orchestra at work, tore up the recorded tapes from which religious music was playing at the casket of the deceased, tore the rosary from the hand of the deceased and stuffed it into his coat pocket, and finally hid the cross which had been brought home from church for the procession. Having accompanied the remains of the brother as far as the church, they remained outside the churchyard all during the services, and then accompanying the remains to the cemetery during the burial rites they stood outside the cemetery fence and dared to approach the grave only after everyone had dispersed.

For the funeral the wife, also a Communist, was punished.

She explained that she had buried her husband as a Catholic because that had been his last wish. She was threatened with expulsion from the Party.

Širvintos

(Mrs.) Viktorija Gurskienė, who had been working for nine years conscientiously in the inter-communal farm building organization, had been on the waiting list for five years for a motorcycle. In 1975 the organization's union unanimously voted Viktorija Gurskienė and her husband, who worked in the same office, an assignment to purchase a motorcycle. In spite of the union's decision the consignment was cancelled upon pressure from the Širvintai *Rayon* Executive Committee, and the Gurskas couple was told sarcastically "Go see your pastor, and let him give you a motorcycle."

Gelažiai (*Rayon* of Panevėžys)

The night of August 28-29, 1975, persons unknown broke into the church in Gelažiai, stole the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, three chalices and a paten. The militia of Panevėžys was informed, but no one came to investigate the crime. The night of September 3, thieves again broke into the church in Gelažiai. The militia was informed again. After the second burglary, the militia arrived. On September 15 the monstrance was found discarded in an orchard. . . . From the militia at Panevėžys, only the following response in writing was received,

"We wish to inform you that your statement about the break-in at the church, dated August 29, 1975, has been examined. Who took the church articles has not been determined by investigation. According to the statement at hand, no criminal action is to be taken, on the basis of Paragraph 131 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian S.S.R., and Paragraph 8, on account of the insignificance of the matter.

S. Kerbedis  
Chief of the Internal Affairs  
Division of the *Rayon* of Panevėžys

October 15, 1975

## Šaukotas

During the night of December 2-3, 1975, the church of Šaukotas was burglarized. The matter was reported to the militia, but the latter never acted.

## Salos

The security police of the *Rayon* of Rokiškis interrogated Treasurer Mažeikis of the Church of Salos about some trees which had been cut down in the churchyard and about an animal which had been taken from there to a farm. Also summoned to Security was Chairman Šukys of the parish council. He was also interrogated about the trees which had been cut down in the churchyard. Moreover, he was asked how many times his place had been searched. Šukys was accused of transmitting information abroad. The security people threatened Šukys, "Have done with the *Chronicle*, or you'll be leaving your wife and children!"

## *Rayon* of Šiauliai

In the forest of Agailiai is a small cemetery, named the Cemetery of Agailiai or the Cemetery of Neilaičiai. According to local tradition, insurgents of 1863 and serfs from the plantation of Kleiščiai who had been whipped to death were buried there. People used to visit the graves. Among the old crosses and shrines the people erected new crosses in thanksgiving for favors received.

At Pentecost, pilgrims would come even from afar off. Later, permission was obtained to conduct services. Residents of the area erected a cement chapel, 9m x 16m in size. During the summer of 1975 the people refurbished the chapel, erecting a new altar, laying a concrete floor, installing a ceiling and white-washing it.

When the work on the chapel had been completed, on September 9, 1975, Vice Chairman Beržinis, of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Šiauliai, who is responsible for the churches and clergy of the *rayon*, organized a work team and completely destroyed the chapel, not sparing even the foundation. The most zealous of the work team was Žaltauskas, a forestry employee, who took great delight in ripping out the altars.

People still visit the little cemetery of Neilaičiai, recalling with heavy heart the bonds of slavery—the Russian terror in Lithuania.

## Diocese of Telšiai

### Skuodas

The Deputy for Religious Affairs, Kazimieras Tumėnas, in the

monthly *Tarybų Darbas*, 1975, No. 4, p. 28, replies to the question, whether clergy are allowed to conduct religious services outside places of worship:

"The priest has the right to give the last rites to patients at home, in hospital or in places of incarceration, if the patients themselves desire it. In the latter two cases it is mandatory to see to it that the rites not annoy other citizens; i.e., that those rites be carried out in separate facilities. It sometimes happens that some authorities, especially hospital employees, do not wish to admit the priest into their institution, arguing that there are no separate facilities, etc.

"Of course, there is sometimes a problem with facilities, but the administration does not have the right to keep the minister from a critically ill patient: it is mandatory to find a separate facility."

Dr. Mažrimas, Chief of Staff of the *rayon* hospital of Skuodas, does not acknowledge this right of the faithful, and he refuses to admit any priest into the hospital to visit dying believers.

On February 3, 1976, Jonas Baltinas lay critically ill in the hospital at Skuodas. He sent his daughter (Mrs.) Jadvyga Grikštienė to Chief of Staff Mažrimas, asking permission to summon the priest. He refused permission because in his judgment, the hospital is a government institution and priests are not allowed to enter.

The family had to discharge the dying patient from the hospital in order to obtain the last sacraments for him. In a few days, Baltinas died.

There are many cases like this one, in which Chief of Staff Mažrimas, of the Skuodas Hospital does not allow people to make use of the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the Constitution. However, no one disciplines him for such unjust and inhumane conduct, restricting the freedom of conscience.

#### Skuodas

(Miss) Izabelė Malukaitė had been working as chairwoman of the Society for the Blind, of the *Rayon* of Skuodas, since 1971. Her work received high ratings. The section of the Society for the Blind of which she was in charge took first place in the zone, and in 1974 it took first place in the entire republic. At the end of 1975 she was asked whether she went to church.

"I have gone, I go, and I intend to continue going, I do not wish to be a hypocrite," replied Miss Malukaitė, "After all, we do have freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union".

For this frank statement, Miss Malukaitė was discharged from her position as chairwoman.

Šiauliai. During the night of March 13, 1976, the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in, Šiauliai, was Burglarized. The offering boxes were torn out.

#### Aukštelkė

During the night of March 13, 1976, culprits broke into the church at Aukštelkė. Not finding anything of value, they broke a candelabra, and vandalized the pedestals on which the candelabra stood.

#### Rayon of Kaunas

On February 11, 1976, a search was made of the quarters of Henrikas Klimašauskas, who was working as an engineer in the planning institute of the construction section of the City of Kaunas. Taking part in the search were four security agents, among whom were Security Agents Linauskas and Lazarevičius. The search lasted six hours. The apartment and a storage shed outside were searched. Personal papers, letters and many manuscripts were seized. The security people failed to find Aleksandr Solzhenytsin's book, *Gulag Archipelago*, which they were seeking.

Henrikas Klimašauskas was arrested and is being held at security headquarters in Kaunas.

#### Kapsukas

Engineer Antanas Garbštas, formerly employed in the state office of security for industry and mining, donated some fiber-glass which he had purchased, for the repairs on the church at Kapsukas. The *rayon* authorities found out.

Engineer Garbštas' behavior was discussed at the party headquarters. He was asked whether he was a believer. The engineer answered:

"Yes."

"So perhaps you attend church?"

"Yes. My parents attended and so do I."

On March 25, 1976 Engineer Garbštas was fired from his job.

Niorai. (Republic of Byelorussia). The Rev. Jonas Grabovskis, pastor of Niorai, when harassed by the Vitebskis government repre-

sentatives for religious activity, explained that he was acting according to the Helsinki Accord. He was told that Leonid Brezhnev signed the Helsinki Accord while drunk, and therefore the anti-religious agitation was to continue as in the past.

#### IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

Veisiejai. On February 16, 1976, the Veisiejai Middle School principal, Stabingis, School Inspector Ditkus, and Klimčiauskas, a teacher, "arrested" those pupils who had attended Mass that day. The "arrested" pupils were forced to write explanations, and as usual in such situations, were threatened, using various methods of blackmail.

To the Attorney General of the LTSR

Sorėka Petras, son of Petras, residing at Dešimtmečio g. Nr. 5, Veisiejai, *Rayon* of Lazdijai

#### A Statement

On February 17, 1976, Interrogator Zinkevičius arrived at Veisiejai Middle School, beat my son Gintautas, a 7th Grade pupil, and forced him to admit falsehoods.

After leaving the interrogator's office my son was unrecognizable even to (Mrs.) Vailionienė, who knows him very well.

My son fled, intending to commit suicide, but was stopped by R. Mizaras and another pupil.

That evening the boy felt poorly. A doctor was summoned and she gave him an injection; but Gintautas was not able to return to his classes for three days. The doctor wrote an explanation which was submitted to his homeroom teacher, Mrs. Ragažienė.

Please investigate this incident.

(Signature)

Veisiejai  
February 21, 1976

To the Attorney General of the LTSR  
Parents of the Veisiejai and  
Leipalingis Middle School Pupils

A Statement

On February 16 of this year, our children participated in a Mass arranged by us at the church in Šlavantai. As the children were returning, the principal of Veisiejai Middle School, Stabingis, with Teachers Ditkus and Klimeiauskas, forcefully intercepted them as they were alighting from the bus, herded them into the school, and threatened them with some kind of electric shirts, forced them to write explanations.

The following day, February 17, Zinkevičius, Gylys, and an unknown captain began interrogating the children anew. Even though the children were minors, much of the interrogation took place without the presence of their parents. The teachers appeared only occasionally. In some instances the children were forced to sign disclaimers that the interrogators had attempted to use them as informers.

The interrogators asked what the children had told the priest during confession. By all manner of threats and deception the children were forced to attest to that which never happened: that supposedly the Šlavantai pastor in his sermon spoke about the bourgeois Lithuanian Independence Day, interposing mottos like "Long live independent Lithuania!" Fourteen year old Gintautas Soroka was beaten during interrogation. It is no wonder that, after suffering 4 or 5 hours of non-stop interrogation, some of the children unwillingly wrote or affixed their signatures to what their teachers dictated, and afterwards were very emotionally distraught, unable to study for several days or to sleep nights.

Sorėka experienced a psychic shock. Dismissed from the interrogation room, he wrenched free of his mother's arms and fled to kill himself. He was stopped by other pupils. A physician was summoned to his home. Despite medical treatment, the boy was ill for three days and could not attend school.

We, the parents of these tormented and brutally belittled pupils, most vehemently protest against such a violation of freedom of conscience and of the LTSR Criminal Code, par. 187.

Veisiejai, March 6, 1976

Kapsukas. In 1975 (Miss) L. Žilinskaitė, a pupil at Kapsukas Middle School, dropped a piece of paper in the classroom with the Lord's Prayer written on it. Finding it, (Miss) I. Jasinskaitė, another pupil, turned it in to their teacher, (Mrs.) Skroblienė. The teacher asked Miss Žilinskaitė, whether the paper did indeed contain her handwriting. The girl admitted to it, and Mrs. Skroblienė called her a parasite and ordered her not to show up in school the following day unless accompanied by her mother.

The teacher began to interrogate the mother, whether the handwriting was indeed her daughter's and whether she forces her daughter to attend church daily, etc.

"Yes, that was written by my daughter. I don't force her to attend church; she goes on her own and even participates in the church choir," the mother calmly answered.

"Leave her at home," recommended the teacher. "Let her do housework during that time. I will also tell her not to attend church."

"I won't allow that. I cannot remain silent when God is torn out of children's souls," objected Mrs. Žilinskienė.

To avoid the energetic mother's protests, the teacher stopped persecuting Miss Žilinskaitė.

Pašušvis. On October 24, 1975, children participating in a funeral Mass were ejected from Pašušvis Church. They were chased out by the principal of the Pašušvis Grammar School, (Mrs.) Jadvyga Baltraitienė. These were believing children; some of them had received their First Holy Communion in the summer of 1975. The administrator of Pašušvis Church, the Rev. Juozapas Vaičekauskas, informed Krikštams, vice president of the Radviliškis *Rayon* Executive Committee in writing, but received no response.

On October 26, 1975, a group of mothers went to Father Vaičekauskas, complaining that their children were returning from Pašušvis School teary-eyed, because the principal, (Mrs.) Baltraitienė, and other teachers were constantly terrorizing them, forbidding them to participate in church services.

On November 23, 1975 (Mrs.) Ona Vedeckienė, from the village of Balandišķiai, complained to Father Vaičekauskas that the principal of Pašušvis School had called her in and warned her that if her son Sigitas attended church and took organ lessons, he would receive a low grade for conduct, a negative character recommendation, and would not be admitted to any school for higher

education. Mrs. Vedeckienė is an exemplary mother of a large family. The principal unnerved her so much, the woman was ill for two days.

The principal warned the believers that she would do everything in her power to ensure that Father Vaičekauskas would not be allowed to say Mass in Pašušvis Church.

On January 5, 1976, Father Vaičekauskas visited Vice Chairman Krikštanas of the Radviliškis *Rayon*. When the priest asked why he had received no response to his earlier complaint, Krikštanas answered that the Pašušvis School principal had acted correctly in chasing the children out of church. Children are forbidden to attend church. The vice chairman warned Father Vaičekauskas not to interfere with the children's atheistic upbringing.

Židikai. On November 2, 1975, a funeral Mass for (Mrs.) K. Šulckienė was held at Židikai Church. Present were the granddaughter of the deceased and about twenty other pupils. Before the Mass, Teacher Dotka asked the pupils to leave the church. Some of the children climbed up to the choir loft but they too were found and chased out of the church.

The results of forced atheistic teaching in Židikai are very sad. In September of 1975 a 9th grade pupil of Židikai Middle School, Bučys, stole a motorcycle. Another 7th grade pupil raped and murdered his younger sister. Are these young people culpable? Yes. But are not they, who forcibly bring them up without God, more guilty?

Radviliškis. In November of 1975 several middle school pupils joined the Radviliškis Church choir. School officials heard about it. Valsiūnienė Middle School Academic dean Venclova, Pioneer Leader (Mrs.) Mackevičienė, and Homeroom Teacher (Miss) Žukauskaitė, called in 7th grade pupil Irena Kauneckaitė to ask her why she attends church, sings in the choir, etc. The teachers offered to take the girl to the motion pictures, to dances and other amusements, just so she would not go to church.

Ona Poškaitė, an 8th grade pupil at the Second Radviliškis Middle School, was called in by her homeroom teacher, (Mrs.) Monkienė, who questioned the girl about her attendance at church and choir. The girl made no denials and answered firmly. The teacher also promised to take her to the motion pictures and to dances.

The Vice-Chairman of the Radviliškis *Rayon* Executive commit-

tee, Krikštanas, summoned the pastor of Radviliškis, The Rev. J. Vaičelionis, in connection with the school children's participation in the church choir.

**Šiauliai.** On March 18, 1976, after the fire in St. George Church, Šiauliai, a group of believers gathered to help repair the main altar, which had not burned. Among them was a parishioner with her twelve year old daughter. It was at this time that a commission, delegated by the Šiauliai Executive Committee, with Vice-Chairwoman (Mrs.) Stulgienė a member, arrived to inspect the church. Seeing the girl aiding in the clean-up, Vice-Chairwoman Stulgienė insisted that the girl's mother take her home, reasoning that it was dangerous for children to be present. The mother saw no danger and did not comply with the directive. Consequently the Vice-Chairwoman ordered the pastor to oust the girl, because school children are not allowed in church.

**Grudziai.** Mrs. Agulian, the homeroom teacher of grade 7C of Grudziai Middle School, on June 14, 1975 asked those pupils who attend church to stand up. Asked why they attended church, the children answered that their mothers told them to do so. The teacher advised them not to listen to their mothers.

**Šakyna.** The principal of Šakyna Grammar School, (Mrs.) Ubavičienė, is working steadfastly to turn the children of believers into atheists. At the beginning of the 1975 school year the principal invited two lecturers and called in the parents. The lecturers said they were able to perform miracles: to make candles light spontaneously, but they had no candles nor other equipment for performing this "miracle". They satisfied themselves with repeating atheistic cliches slandering the Church and priests.

**Žarėnai-Latveliai.** On November 14, 1975, Mrs. Statkienė, the 6th grade homeroom teacher of Žarėnai-Latveliai Grammar School berated those pupils who attended church. The teacher especially terrorized the most loyal churchgoer, Loreta Leonaitytė.

**Nedzingė.** The homeroom teacher of 6A class, (Mrs.) Juravičienė, threatened to publicize the names of those pupils who join the church choir.

7th-grade homeroom teacher, Pigaga, required a pupil,

Lukšys, to make a drawing with an atheistic theme. When the pupil refused, he was humiliated and threatened.

The Letter of a Believing School Girl to  
*The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

When I was in the 4th grade, from the beginning of the school year my homeroom teacher insisted that I join the Pioneers. All 4th grade pupils had to be Pioneers. But I never joined. My homeroom teacher said if not this year, then for sure next year I would have to join. He threatened me with lower grades and other unpleasantness if I did not. Truly, that is how it was. Some teachers consistently gave me lower grades.

My homeroom teacher frequently saw me going to church in the evenings. Once he asked me where I went every evening. I answered that I attend church.

After that he used every opportunity to stress: "Once and for all, stop this going to church!"

Questionnaires were distributed in class with questions such as: "Do you attend church? Where did human beings come from: from a monkey or from God? Who forces you to attend church? Do you celebrate religious holidays? Does the church harm or help?"

I answered, "I attend church. God created human beings. I attend church of my own will. We celebrate religious holidays. The church does only good."

Once my homeroom teacher called me in and said: "I know that you attend church. Well, then, attend! But when the commission arrives and asks whether you attend, whether you believe, then say that you do not attend and do not believe." At home my parents advised me never to renounce or foreswear God.

In class we were frequently required to write atheistic themes.

In this way my homeroom teacher persecuted me for my beliefs until the end of the school year.

## NEWS FROM THE FATHERLAND

### Collective Farm Workers' Strike

In December of 1975, two collective farms in the Kapsukas *Rayon*, "Dovinė" and "Piliakalnis", were consolidated. Early in

December meetings had been held in both collective farms, during which the consolidation had been agreed upon. Present at the meeting was the First Party Secretary of the Kapsukas region, Sinickas. He publicly promised the collective farm workers that after the consolidation a meeting of all workers would be called to elect a new chairman, one of two candidates: either the past chairman of the "Dovinė" collective farm, Pranas Servytis, or Stasys Naraukas, past chairman of the "Piliakalnis" collective farm.

"Dovinė" collective farm was much weaker economically, its workers received lower wages and, besides, the collective farm workers had many personal grudges against the former chairman, Servytis.

On December 10 in the Daukšiai school hall the election of a chairman for the consolidated collective farms was held. Present was a large majority of members of the former "Piliakalnis" collective farm. Members of the former "Dovinė" collective farm did not participate because earlier a meeting of the collective farm minority had been held, in which they had decided to elect Servytis as chairman of the merged collective farms.

On December 10, First Party Secretary Sinickas and Instructor Jankauskas came to the meeting at which the election was to be held. They brought along Servytis, the former chairman of Dovinė collective farm.

This meeting lasted only a few minutes. Instructor Jankauskas nominated Servytis as chairman of the merged collectives. The instructor asked who agreed with the nomination. No one voted for the candidate. Then the instructor asked whether anyone was opposed. All present raised their hands. Instructor Jankauskas then turned to Servytis and extending his hand, said, "I congratulate you on your election."

Various voices were heard in the hall protesting. Sinickas and Jankauskas hid in another room of the school, and later returned to Kapsukas by a roundabout route via Igliauka.

The participants in the election meeting drew up a protest, declaring that they were on strike, signed it and that very day delivered it to the Agricultural Administration in Kapsukas. During the strike no one would milk the cows from the former Piliakalnis collective farm, and no one would feed the animals from there. Only the former chairman of the collective farm, Naraukas, with some former office employees, fed the extra animals.

All the workers of the collective farm went on strike.

During the strike, December 11 and 12, a plenary session of the Communist Party of the *Rayon* of Kapsukas took place. A group of collective farms went to the plenary session and to the attorney general of the *rayon* with their complaint, but they were not received.

All the participants in the strike were summoned to the headquarters of the Kapsukas *Rayon* Security Police and asked who had organized the strike at the collective farm. Everyone said that they had gone on strike because First Party Secretary Sinickas had promised to let the collective farm laborers elect their own chairman from two candidates, but had not honored his word. Moreover, they said that they had voted against the candidate proposed, but in the presence of the First Party Secretary, Instructor Jankauskas had congratulated the losing candidate as the "Winner".

Even though the collective farm workers went to the government of the republic and to the central organs of the government of the U.S.S.R. with their complaints, nevertheless the defeated collective farm Chairman Servytis continues as chairman of the merged collective farms and no one is seriously certifying his failure to be elected.

#### Letter of Vladislovas Žilius

To: First Secretary P. Griškevičius, of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania

On October 27, 1975, my wife and I submitted documents to the Visa Registration Division of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Lithuanian S.S.R., requesting that we be allowed to emigrate in response to the invitation which my wife's brother, living in Israel, had sent us.

Having submitted the aforesaid documents, I was immediately expelled from the Artists' Union and found myself in a predicament, without the right to obtain work anywhere or to contract for work.

All my creative work since 1965 to the present day has been judged by official representatives of the government as "formalism", incompatible with the demands of so-called socialist realism.

I am therefore being subjected to moral and material dis-

crimination, prevented from exhibiting my pictures in official shows in Lithuania or elsewhere.

The profanation and isolation of my creativity, together with the general artificiality and decadence of cultural and creative life in Lithuania has finally convinced me that any further creative activity on my part in my homeland would be meaningless. For me, as a person and as an artist, the principles of so-called socialist realism are profoundly alien. I am convinced that they vulgarize a person's creative activity, turning it into a trade, for the advantage and convenience of the government. Socialist dogmatism with its denial of all other concepts of creativity, is a road-block to the expression of individual creative thought.

Coercion is foreign to my nature, no matter with what high ideals it tries to justify or disguise itself. In the future, therefore, I do not intend to comply with any attempts to administer my creativity. Nor do I agree with the idea that problems of creativity be decided and evaluated by government officials who often have not the most elementary notion of such matters. In this way, the spiritual life of the nation is being falsified and impoverished.

I therefore wish to live and work in another country, where my creativity will not be profaned, and possibly might be of interest and needed.

We consider subjective and unjust the denial by the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Lithuanian S.S.R. of permission for me and my wife to leave the U.S.S.R., on the grounds that our relatives will remain in Lithuania. After all, neither for my wife's brother, nor for many others, whose nearest relatives have stayed behind in Lithuania, was this a reason for refusing them permission to leave the U.S.S.R.

I and my wife, who agrees completely with my convictions and my decision, constitute an independent family, we live apart from and independently of our relatives. Their agreement in writing, where necessary, has been attached to the documents submitted to the Ministry for Internal Affairs.

We desire an objective examination of our petition to emigrate from the U.S.S.R. Our decision is firm and final.

Vilnius, Jan. 23, 1976

Vladislovas Žilius  
Ida Žilienė

Vladislovas Žilius, residing at Sluckio g. 13-9, in Vilnius, was born in 1939 in the *Rayon* of Šilalė. In 1964, he graduated from the

Fine Arts Institute, having majored in graphics. He has participated in a number of exhibits at home and abroad (Malbork, Poland, 1967, 1969; Cracow, 1968; Bareslov, 1969). He has illustrated books, he was art designer for the film, *Jausmai*, and J. Stavinskis' drama, *Spūsties Valanda*, at the Drama Theater of Klaipėda. He worked as editorial director of art publications at the **Vaga** publishing house. Since 1971, he has been chief artist at **Minties** publishers. He works mainly in etching. At the present time he resides abroad.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE CHRONICLE

Transcript of Criminal Case No. 68/1963

DECISION in the name of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

On May 7, 1963, the People's Court of Kėdainiai, consisting of the chairman, People's Judge Olšauskas, and spokespersons for Laščinskas, Public Accuser Žukus, K. Ptašinskas and Attorney Štarka participating, (Mrs.) Stanevičienė as secretary, having fully considered in a public trial which took place in the auditorium of Middle School No. 2 the criminal case in which Algimantas Anastazas Šaltis, son of Vytautas, born May 2, 1944, in Kėdainiai, L.S.S.R., Lithuanian, non-member of the Party, with a ninth-grade education single, recruit, with no previous convictions, unemployed (he was taking a vocational course at night school, in the tenth grade), born of white-collar workers, residing in the City of Kėdainiai, Vilniaus g. No. 12, was accused according to Paragraph 144. 1. d, of the Criminal Code of the L.S.S.R.

Having considered the material from the preparatory and the trial interrogations, having questioned the accused and witnesses, having listened to the presentations of all parties and the final word of the accused, the people's court has decided: that the accused Šaltis, being a student in the tenth grade of the working youth middle School of Kėdainiai, having done no work useful to society (even though he is a physically well and mature young man), regardless of the fact that back in 1960 he had been warned by security organs about recruiting young students in to the so-called "Living Rosary", i.e., the proclaiming of belief in god and teaching of religious ceremonies, nevertheless failed to make the necessary conclusions from this and continued his criminal activities.

Thus, the accused Šaltis in 1961 taught a group of young students religious ceremonies and prepared them for communion. Not content with that, in the summer of 1961, during school vacation time, the accused Šaltis, under the pretext of proclaiming belief in god, organized nine groups of high school students in the *Rayon* of Kėdainiai. Included in this group were some Pioneers and Little Octobrists, whom he taught catechism, and prayers, distributed religious literature among the children, carried on correspondence with the group which had been organized, urged some of the school-children not to enroll in the Pioneers' organization, and not to believe in Communism.

The accused Šaltis taught the above-mentioned group of nine persons about two weeks, and accepted in return one or two rubles per person. During the questioning in the course of the trial, the accused Šaltis did not acknowledge himself to be guilty and explained that he had quizzed the group of nine persons, taught them prayers and prepared them for first communion, but that he had accepted no money from the pupils, and that he never knew that he was not allowed to engage in such activity.

In 1960 he was warned by security organs about teaching school-children religious superstitions and ceremonies, but he pleaded innocent on these counts also. However, the people's court looks skeptically on protestations of innocence by the accused, for they do not coincide with the truth, with the testimony of witnesses, and the evidence.

The witnesses: N. Sinkevičius, C. Kupčinskas, (Miss) A. Zubrickaitė, (Miss) V. Argustaitė, (Miss) V. Mimonskaitė, B. Argustas, J. Trinkauskas, J. Argustas, Z. Vyšniauskas, confirmed that the accused Šaltis had examined them during the summer of 1962 and had trained them for religious services and taught them catechism. This circumstance was confirmed also by the parents of the above-mentioned school-children.

That the accused was involved in such criminal activity back in 1960 and 1961 is confirmed by notation No. 1058 (b.1.82) of the Deputy of the Council of Ministers for the Committee on Internal Security, of the *Rayon* of Kėdainiai, dated April 12, 1963, and the witnesses (Miss) Vasė Mimonskaitė and Bronius Argustas. The accused Šaltis himself confirmed that he had been involved in such activity under the influence of the ministers of religious cult (the pastor and priests) Labonis and Braknis, that he used to receive from them and from the Rev. Paškevičius religious li-

terature, some of which was found in the possession of the accused Šaltis in the course of the search: 144 religious books, 2 booklets, 69 sheets of various notes, 6 notebooks, and 85 photographs.

The above-mentioned evidence shows that the accused Šaltis drew therefrom religious information which he disseminated to the schoolchildren, and that he cooperated closely with the priests. The innocent plea of the accused is contradicted by testimony given by himself during preliminary interrogation. On February 16, 1963, the accused Šaltis in voluntary testimony showed that during the summer of 1962 at the request of (Mrs.) Augustienė and some other woman, he taught children in the Village of Bubliai about God, taught them prayers and similar things (b. 1. 32-33).

He gave similar testimony on February 27, 1963 (b. 139-41). Šaltis explained that he used to assign the children prayers to learn, and afterward he would question them, giving them appropriate marks for their command of the material. This teaching lasted about two weeks. The last day of the lessons, the children brought him a few rubles each, about ten rubles in all.

This testimony by Šaltis agrees with other information in the case, and essentially with the testimony of all the children taught by Šaltis. The fact that the children were taught religious superstitions is attested by the letters sent by Šaltis to B. Argustas, B. Zubrickaitė, J. Argustas, V. Argustas, A. Zubrickaitė, H. Sinkevičius, Z. Vyšniauskas, and C. Kupčinskas.

In these letters he urges and teaches the children to join their hands nicely every morning and pray god that he give them health, to pray at the same time for Šaltis, as their former teacher. He explains to the children that if any difficulties or questions arise concerning the faith, they should turn to him, and he would give them the answer, (b. 1. 10). Thus it can be seen that the accused Šaltis not only taught this group of children, but that he hurts and misleads them, actively working even after teaching this group.

Šaltis has done and continues to do great moral harm to the aforesaid group of pupils, their beliefs and their rights, and the formation of their materialistic world-view. Šaltis' explanation is untrue also in that he declares that he taught the children at the request of the mothers of these children. However, in the people's court only (Mrs.) Vlada Augustienė and (Mrs.) E. Kupčinskienė affirmed that they had requested Šaltis to teach their children prayers and to prepare them for first communion, while all the other mothers and fathers and the children themselves did not request the

accused and expressed no desire in this matter. The accused Šaltis did all this on his own.

All the children, questioned thoroughly, expressed to the people's court that they had not wanted Šaltis to teach them and to misguide them. During preliminary questioning, witness C. Kupčinskas confirmed that Šaltis had told them not to believe in communism (b. 1. 17-18), while H. Sinkevičius and A. Zubrickaitė and Kupčinskas indicated that Šaltis had told them no to join the Pioneers (b.l. 15-16/23-24).

During the trial, at the urging of the mother of the accused Šaltis, the aforesaid witnesses partially changed their testimony. That (Mrs.) Elena Šakienė exercised this influence and asked the schoolchildren to change their testimony, was confirmed by the witness Jonas Trinkauskas. Under the circumstances, the people's court places credence in that testimony of the witnesses (the children), which was submitted in the course of the preliminary interrogation. All of the schoolchildren questioned during the preparatory interrogation were questioned in the presence of an educator and of the teacher of these pupils, (Miss) A. Atkečiūnaitė, who confirmed that the interrogation was carried out in objective fashion.

The accused Šaltis has perpetrated a crime dangerous to the public. His criminal activity is especially dangerous to the younger generation, upon whom Šaltis has a great influence. He tries to mislead them and to steer them on the wrong path. Šaltis' danger to society is confirmed by his fanatical beliefs, which he expressed even in the people's court. Since Šaltis does not understand the degree of his dangerousness, and does not submit to re-education (Much effort was expended on him at school, he was criticized even in the press and by members of his collective, he was warned by security organs, etc.), he did not reach the necessary conclusion, and therefore Šaltis must be isolated from society long enough to be re-educated.

On the basis of the facts set forth above, the people's court, guided by Paragraph 331 and 333 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian S.S.R. has decided:

To judge Algimantas Anastazas Šaltis, son of Vytautas, born 1944 guilty according to Paragraph 144.1 d. of the Criminal Code of the L.S.S.R. and to sentence him to two years of confinement without extra punishment, the punishment to be carried out by placing him in a corrective labor colony of ordinary regiment. The status of the case to be changed from parole to arrest, by taking him into

custody in the hearing room. Sentence to begin from May 7, 1963. The material evidence (the literature found in Šaltis' possession during the search, his notes and photographs) to be destroyed. The sentence can be appealed to the Supreme Court of the L.S.S.R. within a period of seven days from its being passed by this people's court.

People's Judge (signed) Olšauskas

People's Consultants (signed) Čaplikienė and Žaludienė

This is a true copy (signature)

The Supreme Court of the L.S.S.R. on May 28, 1963, decided in favor of the appeal of Šaltis' attorney, to re-classify the decision of the people's court of the *Rayon* of Kėdainiai dated May 7, 1963, and the criminal acts of Šaltis, from Paragraph 144. 1 d. of the Criminal Code of the S.S.R. to Par. 143 and to reduce the sentence to one year of deprivation of freedom.

The People's Judge

Notes by the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church*  
in *Lithuania*

A. Šaltis never testified to his interrogators that he had taught the children at the instigation of Fathers Labonis and Braknis.

During interrogation, the children were often treated harshly and threatened that they would be taken off to a colony. During the trial the mothers were threatened with abrogation of their rights as mothers.

The accused Šalčius was treated harshly both during interrogation and during the trial.

At his trial Šalčius was not allowed to make a final statement. After the first sentence the judge shouted, "Enough! Don't speak nonsense here !"

In the decision of the court it is noted that neither the parents nor their children had wanted Šaltis to teach them the truths of the Faith. This is a classic example of Soviet lying. If neither the parents nor the children wanted Šaltis to teach the truths of the Faith, then why did children come to Šaltis from various villages?

The attitude of the faithful is reflected in the letter of one youngster, written to Šaltis after the trial:

"If this letter reaches you, know that not only I, but also those with whom I associate, all admire you. . . From the bottom of my heart I hope that you, my dear Brother, will continue to carry the banner of the Faith courageously . . ."

### C o r r e c t i o n

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* No. 21, in the article, "The Trial of Sergei Kovalev", mentioned the "teacher" — Security Agent Žebrauskas. The real name of this "teacher" is not Žebrauskas, but Zajančauskas.

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## Afterword

Since 1972, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* has scrupulously and courageously documented the struggle for human rights in that little country on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, occupied by the U.S.S.R, since World War II.

Laboriously typed in carbon copies, and passed secretly from hand to hand the *Chronicle* is smuggled out to the western world, to prick our consciences.

Issue No. 22 of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* begins with a long open letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania, signed by 31 priests of the Archdiocese of Vilnius. The letter, written in response to an article on "Freedom of Conscience" written by a leading anti-religious propagandist, asserts that the faithful in Lithuania today do not have a modicum of the freedoms which atheists had in pre-Communist Lithuania. The letter goes on to document the complaints of religious believers against unfair treatment by the atheistic regime.

The open letter is followed by a report on "Construction of the Church at Tauragnai", a typical case study of harassment of religious believers by the Soviet bureaucracy.

In "News from the Dioceses", we find a report of the partial destruction of a church by fire, due to the deliberate negligence of the local fire department. This is followed by a complaint addressed to the government by Father Juozas Zdebskis, once imprisoned for a year for teaching children religious doctrine. This time he describes how he has been falsely accused of driving under the influence of liquor.

One surprising item reports that there are 1500 secret religious sisters in Lithuania, where all religious organizations are out-lawed. The sisters work mostly as nurses, and also teach religion to children, at the risk of imprisonment or fines.

The message of the *Chronicle*, loud and clear, is that the atheistic government is slowly strangling the Catholic Church in Lithuania, while doing its best to make it look as though the U.S.S.R. respects freedom of conscience.

In this translation, every effort has been made to remain faithful to the original text in every respect, even at the expense of style in some instances,

*Rev. Casimir Pugevičius*  
Translation Editor



Places mentioned in the CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA, No.22