



CHRONICLE OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA

No. 26

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IN LITHUANIA

No. **26**

A Translation of Authentic Reports
from Soviet-Occupied Lithuania

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INTRODUCTION

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 26* is dated March 19, 1977—five years to the day from the date of the first issue to appear in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. Denied access to printing facilities, the propagators of the *Chronicle* laboriously type it in carbon copies and pass it from hand to hand until a copy can be smuggled out to the free world.

This issue opens with a dramatic appeal that the Vatican not appoint any new bishops for Lithuania, even though not one of the six dioceses in that largely Catholic Baltic country has a resident bishop, or Ordinary. The *Chronicle* reasons that new bishops appointed with the agreement of the Communist overlords will only be tools in the hands of the atheists, to be used against the Church itself.

The twenty-sixth issue of the *Chronicle* reports that in 1976 twenty-five priests died in Lithuania, while government restrictions allowed only nine men to complete studies at the sole surviving Roman Catholic seminary in the entire Soviet Union, located at Kaunas, Lithuania.

Even though the number of candidates allowed to enter last year was raised to nineteen, all were carefully screened by the KGB, and pressured to become informers.

The priests associated clandestinely with the clandestine *Chronicle* appeal to the seminarians not to let themselves be infected by government efforts to tarnish their ideals.

Chronicle No. 26 welcomes the appearance of *Tiesos Kelias* (The Way of Truth), an underground newsletter intended primarily for priests. The name was taken from a priests' monthly once published in free Lithuania.

Like previous issues of the *Chronicle*, this one reports in detail a long list of unconstitutional raids, arrests, interrogations and searches in violation of international accords, and aimed at stamping out the bootlegging of religious and other literature banned by gov-

ernment policy. As usual, names, dates, addresses and inventories of articles seized are given in detail.

One of those reported arrested in connection with clandestine reproduction of religious literature, Ona Pranckūnaitė, alleged to be a religious sister, has just been tried and sentenced as this translation of *Chronicle No. 26* goes to press. Details are not available.

New names continue to appear in this issue, but there is also a recurrence of names which figured in earlier issues, indicating continuing harassment of individuals and their continuing struggle for their rights.

One surprise in this issue of the *Chronicle* is the report that Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, the bishop of Kaišiadorys, under virtual house arrest outside his diocese for over fifteen years, was allowed recently to preside and preach at a public Mass celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Archbishop Jurgis Matulevičius, a candidate for beatification.

The continuing resistance of the Church against efforts to destroy it is exemplified in a group of priests from the region of Vilkaiviškis who, summoned to hear a Communist propaganda lecture, embarrasses the speaker with difficult questions.

Continuing government interference with clergy appointments and with priestly ministrations is documented in detail, along with the vandalizing of churches with government blessing.

A revised and more stringent contract regarding property, to be required between parishes and the government places believers at even greater disadvantage than before.

This issue of the *Chronicle* reports its share of specific cases of harassment of school children for the practice of religion, indicating the great struggle over the education of children, going on between the atheistic authorities and religious parents.

This issue also recalls the violent death, under suspicious circumstances, of Father V. Samsonas, sixteen years ago.

Finally, *Chronicle No. 26* urges its readers not to forget the most recent prisoners of conscience.

Once again, the translation here is complete and unedited, down to the final word of thanks from the editors of the original.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Translation Editor

Read this and pass it on!

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA No. 26

In this issue:

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Lithuania.....March 19, 1977

S.O.S.

Word has reached Lithuania from Rome that Bishop Matulaitis-Labukas has requested the Vatican Curia for an invitation, to take care of matters pertaining to the Church in Lithuania—most probably to consult on the appointment of new bishops.

These matters pertaining to the Church are truly in an abnormal state. At the present time, not one diocese in Lithuania has its own Bishop Ordinary. Most Lithuanian dioceses are ruled not by bishops, but administrators. Two bishops, Julijus Steponavičius and Vincentas Sladkevičius, have been banished from their dioceses for over fifteen years now, without trial.

Is it a normal state of affairs that the Catholics of Lithuania have no prayer books, or catechisms, and that the youth is being pressured into atheism? The seminary is run by Dr. Viktoras Butkus, who has compromised himself both at home and abroad.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, as the only independent voice of priests and faithful, feels obliged to declare: *Lithuania needs not new bishops, but new priests*. In the Soviet system, a bishop is no more powerful than a simple priest-administrator of a diocese, when it comes to taking care of Church affairs. Even children in Lithuania know that priests are appointed to parishes not by the bishop or by the administrator, but by state security forces working through the atheist Kazimieras Tumenas.

We will not be exaggerating if we say that for the ordination of a few seminarians and the consecration of the holy oils, there are enough bishops in Lithuania at this time. The future of the Church in Lithuania depends not on the number of bishops or administrators, but on the work of dedicated rank-and-file priests on the pastoral front.

Presently the atheistic regime is trying to hide the tragedy of the Catholic Church in Lithuania from world public opinion, by means of the purple trappings of the episcopacy. In the current state of affairs, Moscow will not allow even average candidates—let alone good ones—to become bishops, so what good will the appointment of new bishops do the Church?

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* appeals to everyone concerned about the persecuted Church—warn the Apostolic See of the atheists' tricks!

PRESSURE BY SECURITY FORCES ON SEMINARIANS

The eyes of many are on the seminary in Kaunas. (The only one allowed to function since the Soviet occupation — Translator's Note.) People of good will are disturbed because it is being strangled by Moscow at the hands of the atheists.

There are not enough new priests to fill vacancies left by those who die. In 1976, twenty-five priests died, but only nine finished the seminary. For eight years everyone has been crying, "The atheists interfere with young men applying for admission to the seminary; they set limits on the number of those who can be admitted, etc.

Let us call these atheists by their correct name. They are the

Central Committee of the Communist Party and the VSK (Vidaus Saugumo Komitetas—the Internal Security Committee—the Lithuanian branch of the Soviet KGB — Translator's Note)—That is, the Party and Security.

To avoid problems, these "protectors" of the seminary increased the number allowed to enter from five to ten, and later from ten to nineteen. Lest anyone doubt the good will of the atheists, rumors are being circulated that in the future the number of seminarians will be increased still more.

Those familiar with the tactics of the Communist Party and of the VSK immediately became concerned over this maneuver: If the number of seminarians is increased, Security will throttle the seminary some other way. It was probably no accident that those applying for admission to the seminary in the summer of 1976 were so zealously recruited as collaborators with the enemies of the Church—unofficial agents of the VSK. Some candidates were invited a half-dozen times for "chats".

The recruiting of seminarians to become the agents of the Chekists (An allusion to the Czarist secret police — Transl. Note) best illustrates how the law of separation of Church and State in the Soviet Union is observed. You may be a priest—even a bishop—but you must at the same time be a Chekist. "We—the Soviet government—will give you a good parish, if you do not attract young people to church. We will allow you to travel to America, if you only proclaim there the freedom of religion in the Soviet Union, or at least keep quiet. We will allow you to maintain contact with the Holy See, if you will only help us realize our plans effectively to subvert the Church."

The recruiting of seminarians and of priests for the subversion of the Church is one of the greatest crimes of the VSK, which must be raised at the conference scheduled in Belgrade on the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act.

No less an offense committed by the VSK against the seminary is the constant screening of applicants to the seminary. According to the VSK, only the following may study at the seminary: those prepared to work as agents of the VSK, invalids, those not too bright, and those of doubtful moral character: For example, one gentleman from Vilnius, upon entering the seminary during the

summer of 1976, expressed himself thus: "Will I ever do some drinking, once I am a priest!" (*The Chronicle* refrains from revealing his name, in the hope that before long he will leave the seminary of his own accord.)

One or the other candidate with good qualifications gets through the VSK screen—then one hears it said, "See, Security doesn't interfere in the seminarians' life!"

One would think that VSK officials would be satisfied that the seminarians are intimidated, distrustful of one another, barely able to make the grade in their philosophical and theological studies, and constantly in need of medication and recuperation. But no, their appetite is too great to be sated.

Vincas Kudirka (Lithuanian patriot and author of the national anthem — *Transi. Note*) wrote over a hundred years ago:

"Nor print nor writ will they allow us;
They want Lithuania dark and dull."

Steeped in the same czarist spirit, VSK officials see that the seminarians' entire interest consists of athletics, parties, breaching of seminary discipline, and an exaggerated concern with one's health and well-being. Just so the interest of the seminarians should not rise to the level of concern for the Church and Country, Security has seen that even Vatican Radio should not be heard in the seminary.

The seminarians are forbidden to have transistors, to read the *Chronicle*, or new religious publications circulating in self-published form. During this academic year, the seminarians have been forbidden to wear even a tiny cross in their lapel, lest they thus annoy any Soviet youth they might meet by accident.

Perhaps now the officials from the VSK would calm down? Not at all! It is too little for them that the seminarians' spirit is fed by the Communist newspaper *Tiesa* (Truth) and by *Sportas* (Sport). One will not find any other publications in the seminary.

Security people are concerned lest, perchance, any "retarded" seminarians turn up, who might be too little interested in Communist "truth". For this reason, during 1976, political information lectures were introduced at the seminary, similar to those in the army or in labor camps.

On December 4, 1976, a commemoration of the USSR Constitution was held at the seminary. The rector of the seminary, Dr.

Viktoras Butkus, spoke of the great achievements of the USSR in all areas of life, and of the most democratic constitution in the world: that of the Soviet Union.

Afterwards, he introduced to the seminarians a lecturer from the "Žinija" Society, saying that "the honorable lecturer will visit us more often and give us an entire series of political lectures".

And indeed, on December 16, the lecturer from "Žinija" gave the seminary a lecture entitled, "The International Situation of the USSR, Its Relations with Other Countries, and The Growing Significance of the Socialist Bloc".

The lecturer did not forget to belittle Academician Sacharov, whom he characterized as a great man, but ideologically uneducated, and given to hallucinations.

APPEAL OF PRIESTS OF LITHUANIA TO THE SEMINARIANS

Sad news has reached us concerning the seminary and the kind of spirit which has recently taken hold there. Without mentioning specific facts, we urge you, Brothers, do not grow old in spirit. Only an old person feels an excessive need for rest, conveniences, warmth, and good food. Youth must be aggressive, heedless of any inconvenience, because it is fired by high ideals.

It is worth recalling our young people from times past. They used to organize groups to write, criticize, debate, without a single complaint about difficult conditions! All were concerned for their oppressed country. Hungry and ill-clothed, they used to devote all their energies to publishing and circulating books and newspapers.

We have few priests, so Lithuania is looking for resolute priests of noble spirit. How many priests and bishops were tortured to death for their loyalty to the Church and Country? How many today die before their time, because the Gulag Archipelago has drained their strength?

Their places must be taken not by spineless characters, but by men of fire with youthful and holy idealism. It will be your task to elevate the Nation's spirit, to stand up courageously against lies, deceit, hatred and the spirit of submissiveness. Will you be able to do so, if you get mired in a swamp of convenience and self-love?

We direct your attention to Bishop Valančius, who so ingeniously resisted the assimilation of Lithuania and efforts to make it Orthodox; to Bishop Teofilius Matulionis, who walked the way of suffering in Communist camps three times, but never transgressed his own conscience. Don't forget that our nation will write off as trash all the conformists and "diplomats" who in our most difficult hour went along with the enemies of Church and Country, who ate well and then dozed while the enemy mercilessly smothered and throttled everyone.

Let no promises or threats break your spirit. Better to quit the seminary than to crawl all your life, bearing the shameful title of "informer". If for any reason you have ties with Security, at all costs—even of your life—break off that vile agreement!

Young brothers, do not fear hardship. Learn to sacrifice yourselves in earnest, since where there is no sacrifice, there is no love. A priest without a great heart is nothing but a sorrow to the Church and a misfortune to himself.

We pray constantly that the difficulties of the present time would not break you, but would toughen you, and that you would gather under the banner of Christ as elite troops.

Your Brother Priests

WE WELCOME *TIESOS KELIAS*

At the end of January, 1977, a new publication for priests appeared in Lithuania, entitled *Tiesos Kelias* (Way of Truth). In appearance, it is similar to the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* and other underground publications. (Typed carbon copies passed from hand to hand — Transl. Note).

Tiesos Kelias, according to its publishers, will be "a window through which more light can be shed on the lives of our priests". It intends to share pastoral experience with priests, to acquaint them with new developments in theology and philosophy, and to provide news of the Catholic world.

A reading of the first issue of *Tiesos Kelias* leaves a good impression: The publishers deal with practical problems and try to answer them concretely. (A journal for priests and laity by the same title was published for years in independent Lithuania — Transl. Note).

We can only rejoice that *Tiesos Kelias* has come out just in time, for the Soviet government plans to publish an official journal for priests, like the *Journal of the Patriarchate of Moscow*. The priests of Lithuania want no such publication.

The *Chronicle* urges all priests to join actively in the publication and the circulation of *Tiesos Kelias*.

INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES

At the beginning of 1977, the apartments of the following individuals were searched:

1. Mrs. Ona Grigaliūnienė, resident of Kaunas
2. Leonardas Stovskis, resident of Kaunas, LTSR 25-čio g.
3. Jonas Petkevičius, resident of Šiauliai. Seized: a camera, *The History of Christ* by Papini, and other items.
4. Balys Gajauskas, resident of Kaunas, Spynu g. 3-8.

At the beginning of 1977, (Miss) Ona Pranckūnaitė was arrested in Panevėžys. The *Chronicle* has no further news about these raids nor concerning the arrest of Ona Pranckūnaitė.

Kapsukas, February 14, 1977. Four unknown men broke into the apartment of Janina Buzaitė. This apartment is under constant surveillance by Security. Many times, Miss Buzaitė's apartment in Kapsukas was searched in her absence. Persons acquainted with Miss Buzaitė were interrogated more than once. One of them was told by Security agents that Miss Buzaitė is a major offender who should be isolated from the public.

THE INTERROGATION OF K. GRINKEVIČIUS

On January 7, 1977, Kazimieras-Antanas Grinkevičius, a resident of the City of Prienai, was summoned to the VAI (the Department of Motor Vehicles — Transl. Note) with his driver's license and his registration fee receipt.

Arriving at the appointed time at the Department of Motor Vehicles, Grinkevičius was taken to Chief Bankauskas of Security. Grinkevičius was questioned for four hours about the living and the dead, those who had been or were in exile, relatives and acquaintances abroad. He was also asked whom he knew in Alytus, Vilnius, Kaunas; who his friends, relatives and acquaintances are in those cities, their addresses, occupations, etc.

The interrogator was particularly interested in knowing whether he was acquainted with Vladas Lapienis and with Father Kazimieras Žilys. They had allegedly met in Žilys' apartment in Alytus. When Grinkevičius replied that he did not know Lapienis, he was asked what priests he knew, what their attitudes were towards the government, and what they talked about.

They further asked whether he had read the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, and what his opinion was of the *Chronicle*. He explained that he had never read the *Chronicle* because, unfortunately, it is impossible to subscribe to it. He had heard of it in radio broadcasts from abroad. Its editorial policy, in his opinion, was commendable, since the Catholics of Lithuania have no official publication, and the *Chronicle* defends the interests of the Church and of Catholics.

Bankauskas could not believe that Grinkevičius, as a good Catholic and a member of the parish council of Prienai, did not receive this newspaper. When Grinkevičius replied in the negative, he was again questioned: What priests does he know? Did he visit Father Zdebskis? (A well-known dissident, who once spent a year in prison for teaching children catechism — Transl. Note). What did he know about the publication of the *Chronicle*, about the attitudes of priests, about the parish priests of Prienai, activities of the parish council, etc?

Several times it was claimed that Grinkevičius must know Lapienis; they returned to his name many times, as they did to the name of Father Žilys.

Moreover, the commandant asserted that the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* is a publication inspired by foreign espionage organizations, with the purpose of calumniating the Soviet system. According to him, tourists from abroad did not see any oppression of Catholics in Lithuania.

Two or three times during the questioning, Bankauskas, locking his papers in his safe, went out into the next room to telephone, he said, since if Grinkevičius told him nothing, he would be sent to Vilnius.

Finally, he gave the prisoner some paper, and taking him to another building, told him to write a description of his life. The interrogator then left and did not return for a long time.

When Grinkevičius had finished his autobiography, he was taken back to Bankauskas' office, where the interrogator resumed his questions about priests' "girl friends", their drinking habits, and the like.

Finally the chief said, "Well, since you won't tell me anything, you'll have to go to Vilnius."

When Grinkevičius inquired when he would have to go to Vilnius, and whether they would take him there, they replied that he had the option of going on his own, or by some other means of transportation. Moreover, his expenses would be reimbursed.

Bankauskas made out a summons for Grinkevičius to report at 10 a.m., January 10, to Prosecutor Urbonas of the Security Committee in Vilnius, at Lenino prospektas 40. Releasing Grinkevičius, Bankauskas advised him not to get involved with the *Chronicle*, and to be prepared at all times to drop in on the interrogator, or to telephone him. He reminded him once again that the *Chronicle* is a publication inspired from abroad, in which facts are distorted.

At 10 a.m. the morning of January 10, Interrogator Urbonas led Grinkevičius through long corridors to his office.

Grinkevičius was offered a seat, and informed of his responsibility for false information, and with the Criminal Code; then the interrogator resumed his questioning, from 10:15 a.m. until 5:15 p.m.

At the beginning he was told, "If you tell the truth straightforwardly, our conversation will not last long, but if you try to conceal the facts or dissimulate, our conversations will be long—and many".

The interrogator inquired whether he knew Lapienis, who has by now been arrested on criminal charges for circulating the *Chronicle*. The answer was negative. Afterwards, Urbonas affirmed that they knew for certain that last winter Grinkevičius had met with him in Alytus.

Then they asked whether the prisoner knew Father Žilys. He replied that he did. He had met him in Jieznas, because the priest used to request to be driven on sick calls, funerals, and elsewhere.

The interrogator further asked whether Grinkevičius had seen or read the *Chronicle*, and what he knew about it. Grinkevičius replied that he had not read the *Chronicle*, had never seen it, and had

only heard of it from Vatican Radio broadcasts, and from a Soviet film concerning the publication.

After this, he was asked once more about Vladas Lapienis. They claimed to have accurate information that one time, when Grinkevičius was visiting Father Žilys, someone had come in, and that, having placed something in the trunk, all three had driven off towards Prienai. Grinkevičius denied everything, claiming that he had never driven anyone from Father Žilys' place, except the priest.

The interrogator asked whether Father Žilys had not discussed the *Chronicle* with him, and whether he had not given him a copy to read.

Grinkevičius replied that when they traveled together in the automobile, there was little conversation, since the priest always prayed, while he himself paid attention to the road. Nor had he ever given him a copy of the *Chronicle* to read.

The interrogator inquired whether Father Zilys used to take anything along with him. Did he ever ask for the car trunk to be opened?

Grinkevičius replied that the priest used to take along a suitcase, that he once brought along from Vilnius some literature from the series *Drašiuju Keliai* (The Paths of the Brave), and that on one occasion, his landlord had helped him obtain some soup bones at the employees' store of the meat combine.

The interrogator returned to the subject of the *Chronicle*, asking his personal opinion of the publication. He replied that he had no strong feelings one way or the other because he had not read it, but had only heard of it from Vatican Radio broadcasts.

The interrogator further asked what specific facts he recalled from events described in the *Chronicle*.

To this the prisoner replied that he was best acquainted with the case of Father Zdebskis, which is directly tied in with Prienai.

The prosecutor, greatly interested, asked how he and others felt about that affair.

Grinkevičius said that Father Zdebskis had been falsely arrested and imprisoned for conscientiously carrying out his duties as a priest, and that the people had been quite shocked by this event.

Then the interrogator replied, "Ours is a large country, and there is no need to consider the opinion of a few thousand people."

The interrogator went on to ask Grinkevičius' personal opinion of the *Chronicle* and of *Aušra* (The Dawn): Did these publications profit the Lithuanian nation?

"I'm hearing about *Aušra* for the first time. The *Chronicle* is of some use, because it defends the affairs of Catholics and of the Church, since Catholics have no official publication."

The prosecutor asserted that only the *Chronicle* could be responsible for the repression of several thousand Lithuanians.

Urbonas did not want to believe that Grinkevičius did not get to read the *Chronicle*. In answer, Grinkevičius said that perhaps they did not trust him.

Interrogator Urbonas asked whether someone had coached him on how to answer questions during interrogations. The interrogator speculated that Grinkevičius could, from January 7 until January 10, have met with some priest, told him the problem and asked for his advice.

Grinkevičius denied these speculations saying that during that time he had had no contact with priests.

He had not even been to church on Sunday since he had been working. His wife, sister, or fellow-workers could not advise him at all, since no one knew just what was wanted of him.

Once again, he was ordered to admit that he had chauffeured Father Lapienis. Among other things, the interrogator reminded him that till then, their conversation had continued smoothly, one might say, in friendly fashion. But they had other methods, and that even though the prisoner Lapienis and others had not till then spoken out, in a short while they would.

Grinkevičius once more denied knowing Lapienis, or having driven him. He requested to be shown a photograph, and suggested that they ask Lapienis himself whether the ride had taken place. The interrogator replied that he would probably do so.

"We know for sure that on March 16, 1976, three persons got into your car: you, Father Žilys, and Lapienis. The latter got out and went into Father Žilys' place while your car was in front and that he alighted in Prienai."

"Most often only Žilys and I went. I never picked up anyone at his apartment, unless it was some traveler stuck at the bus stop or at the roadside, in the rain or snow, whom I did not refuse to

pick up. Besides, it is almost a year, and I don't recall having driven anyone at that time. I keep no diary and I have stated clearly—I picked up no one at the home of Father Žilys," Grinkevičius firmly stated.

Interrogator Urbonas still would not let up: "Perhaps you think that by telling us that you drove Lapienis from Father Žilys' place, you will hurt Father Žilys' own cause?"

"The thought never even occurred to me. Father Žilys is neither my friend nor my relative, and I see no need to hide anything."

The interrogator began to write his report of the interrogation. He worked on it for some time, filling about four pages. When he had finished, he gave it to the prisoner to read, saying that if anything was not clear, or if the prisoner did not agree, "We'll make corrections."

The report stated that the witness met Father Žilys in Jiezna, that they had been introduced by a mutual acquaintance, that they had driven with Father Žilys on a number of occasions to Kaunas and Vilnius, and that Father Žilys had stopped off at a number of addresses in Vilnius and in Kaunas.

Upon reading the report, Grinkevičius wrote the following remarks:

"1. I do not agree with the expressions: 'a number of times to Kaunas, a number of times to Vilnius.' I went two or three times, but a number of times could mean daily or even a hundred times.

"2. I do not agree with the expression, 'He used to stop by at a number of addresses in Kaunas and in Vilnius.'"

S a s n a v a

TO: The Minister of the Interior, Lithuanian SSR.

A STATEMENT BY CITIZEN BRONISLAVA VALAITYTĖ,
DAUGHTER OF JERONIMAS,
A RESIDENT OF SASNAVA, RAYON OF KAPSUKAS

On December 17, 1976, I went to Gardinas and Druskininkai to shop. On my way back, a stranger in the uniform of a militiaman stopped the bus and ordered me to accompany him to the militia office. There three women in mufti, threatening me, stripped me by force and conducted a minute body search.

In spite of my demands, none of the above-mentioned individuals showed me any warrant for the search. Nor would they show me their personal credentials; they did not even tell me their names. During the search, three rolls of film were ruined, along with food items. One of the militiamen sarcastically told me that I could feed them to the birds. No one reimbursed me for anything.

B. Valaitytė

Sasnavą, December 23, 1976

Miss Valaitytė works as housekeeper for the pastor of Sasnavą, Father Albinas Deltuva, who had been transferred by order of Security from the parish at Veisėjai.

Security forces at Lazdijai consider Miss Valaitytė a very dangerous person, because of her influence among school children. Whenever she comes to Veisėjai, the Security forces of Lazdijai go into action.

In searching Miss Valaitytė, the Security organs hoped to find incriminating material; otherwise they would not have stripped her, nor would they have searched her valise three times.

In response to Miss Valaitytė's complaint, the Ministry of the Interior of the Lithuanian SSR sent the following reply:

"On December 17, 1976, you were summoned to the Lazdijai branch of the Ministry of the Interior, and your effects were examined there, in connection with the fact that a woman riding next to you on the bus missed her purse, containing money, and suspecting you of stealing the money, lodged a complaint with Comrade A. Vaikšnora, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of the City of Veisėjai.

"That your things were ruined in the course of the search has not been determined."

* * *

On an earlier occasion, Father Juozas Zdebskis had also been searched by a kangaroo court. In Ukmergė, a group of officials ordered Father Zdebskis out of his automobile, took him to the militia station and without any order from the prosecutor, carried out a search of his person. They counted all his money and read every scrap of paper. When Father Zdebskis demanded that they make

the search a matter of record, the officials replied that it had been no search.

The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* knows other incidents in which Security people have searched individuals or their apartments, contrary to the Criminal Code. Illegal searches are not recorded, so Security agents leave less evidence of their criminal activities.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Vilnius

The third issue of the publication *Dievas ir Tėvynė* (God and Country) has appeared. The article entitled "Mankind Has Always Believed in God" contains a rebuttal to attacks in the book by S. Markonis, *"You're Not Telling the Truth, Father"*.

Most of the issue consists of the article, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life", in which the historicity of Christ is demonstrated from various sources.

The article, "What is Atheism?" shows how world-famous people regard atheism, and how atheism stands up under the realities of everyday life and in the light of the Sacred Scriptures.

The article "Faith—the Eternal Light" critiques the television film, "Do You Believe?"

The publication, medium in size, is **68** pages long.

Kaunas

A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF "FREEDOM"

The political and religious brain-washing of students in Lithuanian institutions of higher learning demands of Security agents ever increasing effort. Every institution of higher learning has assigned to it, permanent "bosses"—security agents, who, like spiders, weave their web: They recruit teachers, at least one student from each class, and administrative assistants to keep track of one another, to watch, listen, and report, so that "everything" might be known to Security; that everyone, no matter where they might be, or what they might be doing, would at all times feel a nagging fear, that his or her conversations would be overheard and reported, so that students and teachers would be permeated with feelings of extreme hopelessness: "Even though everyone sees clearly the most brazen

lies and constraint, nevertheless there is nothing which can be done about it; it is no use kicking against the goad."

Security is quick to terrorize everyone, so that even in the depths of one's mind, a person would not dare condemn government force and deceit.

One of the "bosses" at the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture is Daunys, an interrogator with Kaunas Security. Lecturer Zemaitis of the Department of Agrochemistry servilely helps him.

Word reached them that Virginijus Mačinkenas, junior scientific associate in the microelement laboratory of the aforesaid department, had begun to attend church quite zealously. "He is not to be allowed to do his thesis and must be watched more carefully," came the order from above.

In the spring of 1976, Virginijus applied to the seminary for admission. This was too big a matter for Daunius. The "boss" of the seminary arrived, a lieutenant colonel of Security who had the final word on which candidates could be accepted to the seminary.

For a long time he questioned, pleaded, and lectured the applicant on the realities of life. Finally he decided, "No, we'll never make an agent out of this one." It was not necessary to wait long for the decision of Security, bearing the stamp of the seminary rector.

Drivers at the Agriculture Academy, like chauffeurs of other institutions, sometimes pick up an additional bit of income on their day off by using the government bus to transport an excursion, a wedding party, or a group of mushroom hunters. In this illegal way they compensate for their poor salaries.

Virginijus asked a driver to take a group of pilgrims to Šiluva (One of the most popular Marian shrines — Transl. Note). This time the spider web immediately went into action. Lecturer Žemaitis, like a good overseer and collaborator, used his own car on August 20, 1976, to take Virginijus to Security, where Daunys ranted for several hours, with fists raised, threatening prison sentences and legal suits. This was a great opportunity to get back at his scientific colleague, who went so far as to desire to become a priest.

Professor Baginskas, the department head, was ordered to discharge Scientific Associate Mačikėnas. How to do this quietly, so that "no dog would bark", was the problem of the department head. One thing he could be sure of: Higher authorities would in this

case ignore any infringement of rights. Try not to obey, not to discharge the man, and you could suffer unpleasant consequences.

Thus it was that Mačikėnas was not accepted for the seminary, and on top of it, lost his position. Indeed, for religious believers, in the real Soviet world, there is "the greatest freedom and equality".

There is a completely different spirit among the friendly staff of the department or laboratory which is able to purge itself of Security informers and traitors. In those cases the limitless might of Security ends, and the threatening "all-knowing bosses" become sad parasites in the healthy body politic.

Kapsukas. On January 27, 1977, at Kapsukas—the former Marijampolė—the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Servant of God, Archbishop Jurgis Matulevičius, was solemnly commemorated. Despite the fact that it was a weekday, and the event was poorly publicized, lest the government interfere with the process of canonization, the church was full.

Participating in the ceremonies were many priests and two bishops: His Excellency, the coadjutor bishop of the Archdiocese of Kaunas and of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis, Liudas Povilonis, and His Excellency, the exiled bishop of Kaišiadorys, Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, who presided at the High Mass. Those assisting at the services were pleasantly surprised to see the banished bishop in the pulpit. In a meaningful sermon, Bishop Sladkevičius urged all to walk the way of sacrifice.

There is no comparison between this celebration and the one held some years ago on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Archbishop Matulevičius. At that time, visiting priests were not even allowed to offer Mass in church, and the preacher on the occasion did not even dare mention that Archbishop Matulevičius had been the reformer of the Marian Fathers, and the founder of a congregation of sisters.

It would not even have occurred to the organizers of the jubilee in 1971 to allow a bishop in exile to preach and to celebrate the main Mass. This change in climate clearly testifies that the sacrifices made in struggling for the freedom of the Church have not been in vain.

Vilkaviškis. On January 7, 1977, two young men were picked up by the Ministry of the Interior of Vilkaviškis: Vasily Orlov and Aleksandr Balučevskich. In broad daylight, they had broken into the church at Kybartai, damaged the cross standing on the altar, and taking another cross and a statuette of the Child Jesus, were trying to get away, when they were caught by some of the faithful.

The Ministry of the Interior of Vilkaviškis never did bring these youths to trial, but rather turned them over to the Communist Youth League since the burglars were members of the Communist Youth League.

In February of 1977, a questionnaire was distributed to medical workers in the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis containing the following questions:

"What is your attitude towards religion? What reasons do you have for your religious beliefs? Do you observe religious holidays? Do you observe religious practices? What is your opinion of religion? Do you believe in superstitions? Do you have religious literature or liturgical articles at home? Are you raising your children in a religious spirit?"

The faithful are of the opinion that at the present time *Rayon* authorities should be more concerned about growing juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, and public dissatisfaction over the meat shortage, instead of worrying about people's religious convictions.

* * *

Vilkaviškis. On February 11, 1977, the priests of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis were summoned before the Executive Committee of the *Rayon*. Vice Chairman J. Urbonas of the Executive Committee checked attendance, and another assistant, Ramanauskas, Chairman of the Planning Commission of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, began a lecture on the economy of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, and about future plans.

After the lecture, the priests began to ask what the receipts were in the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis during 1976 for alcoholic beverages.

Ramanauskas read the following statistics: During 1976 in the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, 800,000 litres of liquor, 900,000 litres of wine, 35,000 litres of champagne, and 12,000 litres of cognac were consumed.

Rayon Vice Chairman Urbonas acquainted the pastors with Regulation No. 28 of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic concerning activities of religious groups.

Afterwards, the priests put many questions to the Vice Chairman, which Urbonas was absolutely incapable of answering. In his embarrassment, Urbonas kept glancing at the clock, urging that the meeting be adjourned. But the pastors, as if by design, kept rising one after another and asking the Vice Chairman to explain why the *Rayon* government does not grant them the necessary building permits; why, at the Vilkaviškis hospital, Chief of Staff Sumskis interferes with priests who wish to confer the last sacraments on the seriously ill; why children in school are interrogated for going to church; why the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, after the Helsinki Accord, issued an order which discriminates severely against priests and faithful; why the registration of the religious community of Slabadai is being obstructed, etc.

On February 16, 1977, the parish councils of the *Rayon* were summoned before the Executive Committee of Vilkaviškis. Vice Chairman Urbonas read them the new order of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet concerning the activities of religious groups. Urbonas tried to plant with the representatives of the Faithful the thought that without their knowledge the pastor may do nothing in the parish, while parish councils in all matters must consult with the *Rayon* government. Urbonas reminded those present that these laws were promulgated "not by us, but by order of Moscow."

On December 15, 1976, Vice Chairman A. Vaitonis of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* summoned the chairpersons of the parish council of the *Rayon*, together with the chairpersons of the committees of trustees. Vaitonis explained to those gathered together the order of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, dated July 28, 1976, entitled "Rules Concerning Religious Groups". The Vice Chairman exulted that now there was a law which everyone would have to obey, under pain of punishment.

* * *

Šiauliai. On the last Sunday of Advent, 1976, visitors to the Church of St. George in Šiauliai were amazed to hear their pastor, Father Jokubonis, in his sermon, thanking the government for its assistance in reconstructing the burned-out church, and asking everyone to write as much as possible overseas about the reconstruction of the church, so that even Lithuanians living the farthest away would learn the facts. The people of Šiauliai say that perhaps the atheists ought also to be thanked for burning down the church.

* * *

Igliauka. In the Spring of 1976, the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs demanded that the bishop transfer to another parish the pastor of Igliauka, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, and the pastor of Veisiejai, Father Albinas Deltuva. By shifting priests from parish to parish the atheists want to hurt pastoral work and to break the spirit of the priests.

The faithful of the above-mentioned parishes, having learned of the transfer of their pastors, began to knock on the doors of *Rayon* offices, of Deputy Tumėnas and of the Chancery, defending their pastors and asking that they remain where they were.

As Father Deltuva was leaving the Veisiejai parish, many people gathered to see him off. The officials of the *Rayon* of Lazdijai attempted to interfere with the send-off.

On the evening of August 16, 1976, Father Svarinskas offered his final Mass in the parish at Igliauka, and many of the faithful, including youth, knelt at the Communion rail. The following day, a large group of people insisted on accompanying their pastor to the parish at Viduklė. Hardly had the cars left Igliauka, than the militia arrived. However, they were too late to break up the demonstration.

At Viduklė, a large contingent of parishioners, together with several neighboring priests, was waiting for their new pastor. Singing Psalm 45, "God is Our Refuge and Our Strength", they all entered the church, where the new pastor offered Mass and preached an appropriate sermon.

A couple of days later, Raseiniai Security was checking with people to see whether the Lithuanian national anthem had not been sung. The security people have probably forgotten that the anthem

used to be sung during the first years of the Soviet government in Lithuania, until 1948.

* * *

Vosyliškis. On November 30, 1976, the administrative committee of the *Rayon* of Raseiniai, consisting of Z. Butkus, Secretary D. Kleivienė, (Mrs.) O. Pikelienė, V. Gylis and J. Laurinavičius, fined the pastor of the Parish of Vosyliškiai, Father Jonas Survila, thirty rubles for organizing a procession to the cemetery on the eve of All Souls, (November 1, 1976).

The above mentioned procession occurred in Žaiginis, (Father J. Survila was substituting for the pastor of Žaiginis, Father B. Radavičius), which is a small, out-of-the-way village, with the cemetery near the church. The *Rayon* officials, applying the order of July 28, 1976, had to stretch their imagination considerably in order to fabricate an "offense".

* * *

Viduklė. At the end of October, 1976, the pastor of Viduklė, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, announced that on the Eve of All Souls a procession to the cemetery would be organized, to honor the dead and to pray for them. Since the atheists go to the cemetery at 7 p.m., the pastor moved the time of the procession forward one hour.

On October 27, Father Svarinskas was summoned to the Raseiniai *Rayon*. Chairman A. Skeiveris of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon*, and his assistant, Z. Butkus, forbade the pastor to go to the cemetery. According to them, the right to organize a commemoration of the deceased belongs exclusively to the atheists. The officials of the *Rayon* tried to support their order with secret instructions dated 1961.

The pastor of Viduklė tried in vain to argue that the Soviet constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, that the Soviet government signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that Leonid Brezhnev himself signed the Helsinki Final Act. The officials would allow no discussion, categorically declaring:

"Who do you think you are, refusing to obey? The heads of all the collective farms listen to us. If you go to the cemetery, we at the *Rayon* will not stand for it..."

At 6 p.m. on November 1, 1976, both priests of Viduklė to-

gether with a crowd of a thousand or so left the church for the cemetery, which is located at the edge of town. The faithful maintained good order, singing the Litany of the Saints as they processed.

In town and at the cemetery, there were many security agents and officials of the *Rayon* administration, observing the procession and the services at the cemetery.

At 6:50 p.m., the faithful, singing "God is Our Refuge and Our Strength" (Psalm 45) returned to the church. The people were happy that for once, after so many years, they were able decently, without the "help" of the atheists, to pray for their dead.

On November 16, 1976, the pastor of Viduklė, Father Svarinskas, was summoned before the Administrative Committee of the *Rayon* of Raseiniai, and accused of organizing a procession along Tarybų Gatvė, thus obstructing traffic. Moreover, he disturbed the populace, thus transgressing the order of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR, dated July 28, 1976.

By decision of the Administrative Committee, the pastor was fined 50 rubles.

Thus, even after the Helsinki Accord, the basic argument of the atheists in Lithuania is force. However, many priests are no longer swayed by this argument.

The pastor of Viduklė took this decision of the Administrative Committee to the People's Court of the *Rayon* of Raseiniai.

On December 20, 1976, The Court of Raseiniai, presided over by the People's Judge E. Jaras, with the People's Associates R. Milašius and (Mrs.) E. Miknienė participating, and (Miss) B. Balčiūnaitė as secretary, with Prosecutor (Miss) V. Petrauskaitė in attendance, rejected the complaint of Father Svarinskas in secret session.

Judge Jaras declared the judgment of the court final and not subject to appeal.

Citizens of Vidukliai were ordered from the court room. It was their good fortune that the doors in back were slightly ajar, so that the people were able to hear the proceedings. It was strange that such a minor case had to be hidden from the populace which, according to the atheists, was so disturbed by the All Souls procession.

This case reminded people of the trial of Father Prosperas Bubnys in the same courtroom, where he was sentenced to a year of imprisonment for teaching catechism to children. This unfortunate

trial, which compromised the atheists so badly, remained a topic of conversation among the people of Raseiniai for a long time.

* * *

Palanga. During the summer of 1976, the choir members of the church in Palanga began learning the hymn, "God, Our God, Hear Our Country, Lithuania". Immediately, the pastor, Monsignor Barauskas, appeared and forbade the singing of the hymn. It remained unclear to the choristers, whether the pastor did so under duress from government officials, or on his own.

Žemaičiu Kalvarija. Throngs of hundreds of thousands of people annually participate in the great religious festival at Žemaičių Kalvarija (Calvary of the Samogitians). Children, youth and adults devoutly receive the Sacraments, assist at Mass, and make the Way of the Cross.

During the festival last year, the Faithful noticed the Deputy for Religious Cult, Tumėnas.

"Perhaps the man has converted," remarked those who saw him. Alas, they were mistaken.

Tumėnas, accompanied by two high-ranking clergy, passed by the enthroned Blessed Sacrament without genuflecting, and the priests respectfully seated him in the sanctuary, right by the main altar.

The people, packed elbow to elbow, knelt at the consecration, while Tumėnas remained seated. Is this proper? Why is this atheist given a place of honor?

"We believers never mount your rostrums, nor do we crash the gate at your Party conventions. The Deputy for Religious Cult, as an atheist, has no place in the sanctuary, because his behaviour offends the sensibilities of the faithful," write some Samogitians to the *Chronicle*.

* * *

Grūstė. (*Rayon* of Mažeikiai). Since days of old, in the cemetery of Grūstė stands a large, beautiful chapel, which the local inhabitants love and willingly visit. Annually the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene is celebrated there, with great crowds of the faithful participating.

In the fall of 1976, members of the staff of the museum of atheism in Vilnius and of the Folk Institute of the *Rayon* of Mažeikiai showed up and demanded that the caretaker open the chapel. The visitors said that they wished to examine it as an architectural monument. Entering the chapel without waiting for an invitation, the "guests" fell to taking down the stations of the cross. The caretaker protested, and a disturbance broke out. People who were at the time caring for their relatives' graves ran in and demanded to see their permit.

The atheists, having stolen seven of the stations of the cross, got into their cars and left. The remaining seven stations the faithful themselves took possession of.

A few hours later the people again noticed the same car approaching. Now the "guests" had some kind of permit from the government of the *Rayon* of Mažeikiai. They demanded that the chapel be opened. Not finding the other stations of the cross, they angrily went their way.

* * *

Druskininkai. A day honoring the dead was proclaimed in town for November 1, 1976. Participants in the solemn procession, consisting of representatives of various organizations and sanatoriums visited the graves of Soviet soldiers, made political speeches, and played mournful music. With this the commemoration of the dead ended.

The next day was All Souls. After dark, the parish cemetery lit up with thousands of candles. Not only relatives of the deceased, but also hundreds of vacationers from all corners of the Soviet Union headed for the cemetery. They were fascinated by a spectacle, such as one will never see in Russia.

As the people dispersed from the cemetery, suddenly an explosion was heard. A few minutes later, there was a second explosion, then a third, and thus one after another, a dozen or so reports. No one doubts that these were the atheists' "bouquets". More than one person, especially women up in years, were severely frightened.

Visitors to the cemetery, parishioners as well as vacationers of other nationalities, were disturbed by this.

* * *

Kaunas. The specialist in the amber cleaning and polishing section of the Kaunas art-works production center at Druskininkai (formerly the "Metalistas" amber works), newly appointed as Party secretary, found a decorated Christmas tree in the office on Christmas eve. She hurled it to the ground and broke all the decorations. Going to the other sections, the Party Secretary demanded that all Christmas trees be destroyed under pain of various punishments and unpleasantness, which could last all year: the abolition of bonuses, etc.

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Šiauliai. On October 25, 1976, Mečislovas Jurevičius was summoned before the interrogator, Lieutenant of Militia Kerbedis, in the Department of Internal Affairs (VRS — for *Vidaus Reikalų Skyrius*—Lithuanian version of the Russian MVD — Transl. Note) at No. 19 Kapsuko gatvė.

The lieutenant posed a number of questions and wrote up a report.

"How much was your sentence, and for what?" asked the militiaman.

"I was sentenced according to Paragraph 58 to twenty-five years, plus five years deprivation of rights."

"When were you arrested and when were you released?"

"They arrested me on May 29, 1950, and released me June 29, 1956."

During the interrogation, Senior Lieutenant Skarbauskas entered the room. He deluged the prisoner with various questions:

"Why aren't you working? You're making a great mistake. You should have gotten a job, and after that tried to clarify, seek justice, and to struggle. Besides, couldn't you come to an agreement to be excused from work on religious holidays?"

Jurevičius explained that he had worked an extra day which he had requested should be credited to him against Christmas Day.

In return for the overtime work which he did at the request of the shop management, the supervisor allowed him to choose any day off except Christmas. Jurevičius submitted a certified request in writing, asking for December 25th off. His request was ignored, even though Party member Čepukaitis was given the day off, perhaps to observe who was going to church.

Earlier, the management of the shop used to let Jurevičius take off on religious holidays. However, when on May 20, 1973, Jurevičius erected a shrine on the Hill of Crosses, the persecution and tension began.

The militiamen asked the suspect what he desired.

"I want to return to work at the Workshop for the Blind. I demand that my work record, which indicates that I was discharged for taking unauthorized leave from work, be corrected, and that I be reimbursed for being laid off."

The interrogators indicated that there would be no such thing. Senior Lieutenant Skarbauskas threatened to give him no peace until he obtained work.

Upon completion of the interrogation, Jurevičius refused to sign the record.

Pasvalys. In Pasvalys, Joniškis, Radviliškis and other cities of Lithuania, the atheistic government forbids the body to be brought into church for funeral services. There was a similar order earlier in Lazdijai, Prienai, Vilkaviškis, Kapsukas and elsewhere: people were required to leave the casket outside the doors during the services. Where the people energetically protested, this order was rescinded.

Paberžė. On December 27, 1976, the pastor of Paberžė (*Kėdainiai Rayon*), Father Stanislovas Dobrovolskis, was summoned to Vilnius by the KGB. Two security agents lectured Father Stanislovas for several hours on what to do and what not to do, in order to be a loyal citizen of the Soviet Union and a priest.

The teachers from the KGB suggested to the pastor of Paberžė that he was the most restless priest in Lithuania, and that he must be engaged in some illicit activity. The security people officially warned Father Stanislovas about his sermons, which they termed anti-Soviet. The official warning was filed with the Office of the Chief Prosecutor of the Lithuanian SSR.

Father Stanislovas had in several of his sermons urged the faithful to straighten their spines, which had bent under Hitler and Stalin; in other words, he urged them to be informed Catholics.

The name of the pastor of Paberžė is known not only in Lithuania, but widely throughout the Soviet Union. The KGB knows that many tourists visit Father Stanislovas, to see his interesting museum.

They are afraid that the priest might infect these tourists with "anti-Soviet" ideas.

At the present time, they would like to transfer Father Stanislovas from Paberžė.

* * *

Ukmergė.

A Lithuanian's Lament

"The sky is grey over our country,
the clouds will not disperse..."

How can the nation's sons and daughters rejoice when the attempt is being made to root out of their hearts that which they hold dearest, that which their parents and great grandparents guarded so zealously, even at the cost of suffering and death? This is our holy faith. It was a comfort to Lithuanians exhausted by serfdom, who on their way back from work levies used to seek solace at their moss-covered wayside shrines.

Our faith, which shone in all its glory as a beacon to our parents, brothers and sisters at the dawn of our independence, strengthened us in the confusion following the war, and sustained our martyrs in prison, is today being undermined by all means possible. The faithful are hindered from practicing it freely. The baleful eye of the atheist follows them even to church.

Hear this: Albinas Morkūnas, employed as a specialist at the *Vienybė* factory, assisted at Mass at Easter in the parish church of Žemaitkiemis. For this "offense" he was relieved of his position as chairman of the local union executive board. Instead of being first in seniority, he wound up last.

Among us there are not scores, but hundreds of such cases. There are many in our factories and schools who on account of their religious practice, wear the opprobrious name of "fanatic". However, the more a Lithuanian is subject to attack, the more courageously he professes his faith. From the hearts of those who love God and country, rises a plea for help:

"O God, will it continue like this for long?
How much more will this misfortune last?
Strengthen our flagging spirit,
O Holy One hanging on our wayside crosses!"

Jurbarkas. As reported earlier, in August, 1976, the graves of priests buried in the churchyard of Jurbarkas were desecrated, and the statue of the Good Shepherd there was vandalized.

On December 15, the People's Court of the *Rayon* of Jurbar-kas tried the perpetrators of this criminal atheistic act: Jonas Puišys and Jonas Matūzas. Both of them, having spent three months in jail, left the trial free men.

During the trial, both of the accused clearly admitted that the originator, leader and co-perpetrator of this criminal plan was Gintautas Čiumielius. Since he is a member of the Communist Party, Secretary of the Communist Youth Organization, and an auxiliary militiaman, he participated in the trial merely as a "witness".

This farce of a trial surprised even the lovers of comedy.

"A hawk does not strike out a hawk's eye..."

"Out of the sack protruded an awl..."

* * *

Šlavantai.

To the Chief Prosecutor of the LSSR

Copy to: His Excellency Bishop Liudas Povilonis

A Statement by the Rev. J. Zdebskis

At the beginning of December, 1976, while I was out, four unknown citizens arrived, one of them in militia uniform. Finding my mother and some guests at home, they arbitrarily walked about my rooms, insulting my guests with threats. They gave no names, nor did they leave any warrant, or record of the search.

A few days earlier, a similar operation was carried out by other persons, among whom was the principal of the Šlavantai Middle School, J. Petrauskas.

I request the Prosecutor to explain the incident and to remind the persons mentioned of Soviet law.

J. Zdebskis

Šlavantai, December 20, 1976

Pastor of Šlavantai

* * *

Stulgiai.

AN OPEN LETTER

The Honorable K. Pikturna, Editor of the "Communist Word" of Kelmė:

On May 29, this year, in your column entitled "Don't Do As I Do, But Do As I Say", you write:

"Some time ago, the pastor of Stulgiai, J. Bučinskas, discharged from work the little old lady (Miss) Žaludaitė, who had served the church all her life..."

In your article you fail to mention why I fired her. Why do you not mention that Miss Žaludaitė showed up in the Village of Stulgiai not as an employee of the church, but as a vagrant, unable to cope on her own? That she was not so much hired, as given shelter? This can be confirmed by (Mrs.) Mikutienė, who lived in Stulgiai at the time. At the present time, she still lives in the vicinity of Kražiai.

Why do you not mention that the self-same Miss Žaludaitė, approximately twelve years earlier, together with Father A. Zukas, was evicted from a house belonging to the church, and was left without support or shelter?

In reporting the matter, you should have mentioned that I terminated her employment at the order of (Mrs.) Drazdovienė, Directress of the local medical clinic. Žaludaitė had had a major operation. Why do you not wish to know that I arranged a house for her? This can be attested by those who worked on it: Vladas Garalavičius, of the Village of Stulgiai, Antanas Rudys, of Darvyčiai Village, Antanas Kvietkus, of Daidatiniai Village, Edmundas Bazauskas of Stulgiai Village, and other men of the area.

Incidentally, a request was made to the Chairman of the Communal farm, A. Navickas, asking any assistance he might give. The answer was negative. I then applied to S. Ačas, the District Chairman, requesting a few sheets of asphalt roofing. He replied, "I have no way of writing it off."

Why do you keep silent about the fact that the bed and bedding were given her by me? This would have been verified by (Mrs.) Bronė Milašienė, who lived in Stulgiai at the time, and by other women who were neighbors of Miss Žaludaitė.

You write: "... He put her out without asking where she would get work or how she would make a living."

But why do you keep silent about the fact that it was I who obtained her invalid's pension for her? This can be confirmed by Doctor Kopkaitė, of Telšiai, by Dr. Tamulionienė, of Kaunas, and

the Director of the Psychiatric center, Dr. Aganauskienė, of Kaunas. After all, the District Soviet was approached on this point several times. The answer was, "We have no funds for that." So it was I who obtained the invalid's pension which Žaludaitė had coming.

Honorable K. Pikturna, I have heard it said that in the labor camps the inmates have a rule among themselves: "You must not strike a man who is tied up." Those who break this rule are sentenced by their fellow-inmates to death. It is well and good for you to write articles calumniating me and by the same token other priests, when it is impossible for us to defend ourselves against these articles of yours in the press, on radio, or by television.

If I were to write even the slightest untruth about you, then you, feeling yourself wronged, would probably take me to court. But when you calumniate me in the press, I cannot, practically speaking, demonstrate my innocence in that same press, even though the law provides no such exception for priests or religious believers.

Does your atheistic conscience consider it honorable to take advantage of such a situation? Shouldn't your honor, as an editor, be greater than that of the inmates of labor camps?

While I was living in Stulgiai several persons were discharged from work: Pranas Varanavičius as labor brigadeer; Vytautas Zubrickas as a farm laborer; and the teachers (Mrs.) Zieringienė, (Mrs.) Grigaitienė and (Mrs.) Terapienė, from the elementary school at Stulgiai.

Now these women had worked in education for a long time. Did you write about them, inquiring where they would be working or how they would make a living? But you raise such questions with me, simply because I am a priest and you can say or write anything you want about me, without regard to elementary human truth.

Further in your article you write, "At the beginning of this year, the little old lady (Miss) Pranciška Butkutė died abandoned in the hospital..."

Everyone living in the Village of Stulgiai knows that Miss Butkutė died in the Village of Patulgis, at the home of (Mrs.) Sofija Kazdailevičienė. She died suddenly, and was found dead the next morning. The body was taken to the hospital at Kelmė for autopsy. It would be interesting to know why you conceal the fact that about 65 rubles were collected from the faithful for her funeral. This can

be verified by: Ona Jakutienė, of Stulgiai; Aleksas Volfa, of Stulgiai; Bronius Jakšta of the Village of Dvarvyčiai; Povilas Kontrimas, of the Village of Žirnaiciai, and others who contributed funds towards the burial of the deceased. Money was also collected for the casket. So the faithful did take an interest.

If it was the District Soviet and the management of the commune who purchased the casket and furnishings, then where did the money contributed by the faithful disappear? What was it used for? Willy-nilly, the thought arises, confirming the words of Antanas Skinderis to the effect that District Chairman S. Ačas drank for three days after Miss Butkutė's funeral.

Moreover, why was no attention paid to the requests of the faithful that the deceased be buried with religious ceremonies? After all, those at the funeral were all believers, except for Ačas and Party Secretary A. Snilis. Can two people outweigh the demands of twenty or more of the faithful? Was it not because they are believers that no heed was paid them, and one may act with them as one pleases?

You write: "Among them were some, who, bearing the casket to the cemetery, tied the cemetery gates..."

None of those attending the funeral saw the gates tied. The men who carried the casket freely entered the gateway, with no interference from anyone. Nor did the caretaker of the cemetery, Ona Jakutienė, nor Sofija Druktenytė, nor Ona Sungailienė nor Stasė Vitkienė, nor any of the other women see the gates tied. And when Viktoras Garalevičius, on the occasion of his wife's retirement, asked the District Chairman Ačas why he had said so, the latter replied, "I lied—There was nothing else I could do."

Honorable Editor Pikturna, I would like to ask you on what you base your statement that in a sermon, I said that Miss Butkutė should be re-interred?

Of 150 to 200 believers participating in services on Sunday, not one could have heard any such announcement, because it simply was not said. And this allegation was denied by me on March 5 of this year, when I was summoned before the District Soviet by Vice Chairman Pažarauskas, of the *Rayon* Executive Committee. If it was still unclear, they could have asked the faithful. After all, you have all the facilities, you could have checked.

Moreover, no one in Stulgiai that day of Miss Butkutė's funeral

saw any procession, cross, banners or any priest in liturgical attire.

But then why may I not bless the grave, or pray? After all, this was all done at the grave of a believer, not of an atheist. The deceased had been a believer all her life, and prior to her death, she never signified to anyone that she was renouncing her faith. What law forbids placing flowers or wreaths on the grave of the deceased? Perhaps it is forbidden just because it was done by religious believers, with myself officiating as a priest.

On the road from the school to the Village of Stulgiai is a sign saying, "An orderly homestead gives pleasant rest". These days the press and television urge more and more frequently that the individual homesteads come back. It is therefore unclear to me what you meant by writing that I live in a well-kept homestead, where there is a new garage, with several lacquered "Zhiguli" automobiles.

In the yard stands not a garage, but a farm building erected according to the typical Plan 408. The out-buildings and the main building were checked with *Rayon* architects and a permit for the building was obtained from the *Rayon* Executive Committee. Where the "lacquered Zhiguli" automobiles came from, you can ask the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Honorable Editor Pikturna, I do not know what motivated you to write this article, disseminating lies and misleading your readers. Most probably, by so doing, you hope to serve the propaganda purposes of atheism in the *Rayon*. Even the atheists are bound by the universal norms of ethics.

If you lie so baldly to people who clearly know the facts, then does it not follow that all your work on behalf of atheism is based on a lie? By this article, do you not demean the noble title of "editor"? I do not know whether, having dared to write such a bald lie, you will have the will power to retract it.

A person of honorable and strong character, having made a mistake, will always rectify it. We live in the twentieth century. You preach equality and fraternity. It is time to stop trying to do us priests in with lying atheistic propaganda.

And having had the nerve to calumniate me, will you have the nerve and self-respect to retract those calumnies, well known to the residents of the District of Stulgiai—or at least to see that the *Ko-munistinis Žodis* prints the full text of my open letter?

I am sending copies of this open letter to:

1. His Excellency, A. Vaičius, Administrator of the Diocese of Telšiai.
2. The Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs.
3. The editors of "Komunistinis Žodis" of Kelmė *Rayon*.

Rev. J. Bučinskas

Stulgiai

Pastor of Stulgiai

Telšiai

TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OF THE LITHUANIAN SSR:

A Petition from Citizen Aldona Šeduikienė, daughter of Feliksas, residing at Pionierių 51-1, Telšiai.

In August of 1976, I applied to Director A. Šulcas, of the children's music school of Telšiai, for a position in the institution under his direction. With my application I submitted my Diploma, No. 2371 31, issued July 2, 1972, by the State Conservatory of the LSSR, which certifies that I have completed studies, specializing in choral conducting. The principal told me that they had no lack of choral directors, but that there was a position for an accompanist.

The principal kept my application and document, and asked me to come by in a couple of days, when a teachers' meeting was scheduled, for a final answer.

On the appointed day, I stopped by. The principal first asked me where my husband works. Having learned that he is the organist at the Cathedral of Telšiai, he told me that he did not have the authority to engage my services, and that the Second Secretary of the Communist Party of the *Rayon* of Telšiai was willing to speak with me if I had any questions concerning the matter. If the matter were cleared up there, said the principal, returning my application and diploma, I was to apply directly to the Department of Education.

The Assistant to the Principal of the Children's Music School of Telšiai accompanied me to the office of Second Secretary V. Duoba of the Communist Party of the *Rayon*, and was present during the interview which followed.

The second secretary inquired about my husband's beliefs and

about mine, and learning that we are religious believers, refused to issue a permit for me to work at the Music School for Children.

Some time later, at the beginning of September, I paid a visit to V. Motuzas, Director of the Department of Public Education of Telšiai, asking him to explain why I was not allowed to work at the Music School for Children. The Director replied that it was on the basis of the Soviet government decree on Separation of Church from State and of School from Church, and said that teachers with religious beliefs, as soon as their beliefs were discovered, are discharged from the educational system.

Knowing that the Constitution of the USSR guarantees freedom of conscience to all the nation's citizens, and that refusal to hire citizens because of their religious beliefs, is liable to criminal action according to Paragraph 145 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR, as an offense against the laws concerning separation of Church from State and of School from Church, I am forced to submit this complaint to you.

Please tell me why the Department of Public Education of the City of Telšiai arbitrarily transgresses Soviet law. When will the situation be remedied? I am asking not for privileges, but demand my rights to work in the educational system, not only as an accompanist, but as a music teacher, according to my specialty.

A. Šeduikienė

Telšiai, January 14, 1977

* * *

"CONTRACTS" FOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS

In 1948, the Soviet government ordered that every church have a "committee of twenty" of the faithful, and allowed them, in accord with a "contract" drawn up by the government, to rent their own churches, which the government had confiscated. If the committee did not sign the contract, the church was threatened with closure.

No one doubted that Stalin was capable of carrying out this threat. The country was cowed: People were being hauled off to Siberia, prisons and dungeons were packed with innocent people, in the city squares lay the mutilated bodies of partisans, a third of the priests were in the Gulag Archipelago, and the only bishop left

in all of Lithuania, Kazimieras Paltarokas, hoping to save priests and faithful, did not oppose the compulsory signing of the "contract" too strenuously.

Here is the kind of "contract" which was foisted on the faithful of Lithuania:

"1. We, the undersigned citizens, contract to take care of the house of prayer consigned to us, together with all property belonging to it, and to use it exclusively for the purposes for which it has been assigned. We accept the responsibility of keeping up and guarding the property consigned to us, and of carrying out all the responsibilities which this contract places upon us.

"2. We contract to use the building, and to make it available to all others of the same faith, exclusively for purposes of religious worship and not to allow to perform therein such religious services, any ministers of cult not registered with the Deputy for the Lithuanian SSR, of the Council for Religious Cults attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

"3. We contract to do everything necessary, so that the property entrusted to us would not be used for purposes not in accord with Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this contract.

"4. We contract to pay from our own resources all expenditures for the maintenance of the house of prayer, and also all other expenses necessary for the repair, heating, insurance, safety, local taxes, etc.

"5. We contract to keep an inventory list of all appurtenances of cult, including articles of religious cult newly acquired by gift or by other means, and which are not personal property.

"6. We agree to allow persons deputed by the Executive Committee of the city, or by the Deputy of the Council for Affairs of Religious Cult, to examine the property, though not during the hours of services.

"7. For destruction or damaging of property entrusted to us, we assume collective responsibility.

"8. In case of the return of property received, we contract to return it in the same condition, in which it was received for use and care.

"9. In case of transgression of the terms set forth in this con-

tract, we are liable before the law, and moreover, the Executive Committee of the city has the right to terminate the contract.

"10. In the event that we find it necessary to terminate this agreement, we are required so to inform the Executive Committee of the city in writing. Moreover, within a week after the submission of said resignation in writing, we are not relieved of responsibility for care of the property, provided in the contract, and we bear all responsibility for the carrying out of the contract. We also agree within that time to return the property received, in good order.

"11. Each of us signing this contract, has the right to withdraw from the number of those involved, by submitting our resignation in writing to the Executive Committee of the District. This, however, does not relieve the individual resigning, from liability incurred for damages to the house of prayer or to other property received, incurred while the person resigning was a member of the management of the property.

"12. None of us, individually or collectively, has the right to prevent any citizen belonging to our confession, and whose rights have not been taken away by law, from signing this contract at a later date, and becoming a full-fledged participant in the management of the property, together with all who have signed this contract."

Soviet propaganda is constantly condemning capitalists, who unlawfully take possession of material goods belonging to others. Is there another such capitalist in the world, who would take everything from a person, and then rent back to that same person the very things which are his, forcing him to pay rent, confiscating those things which the tenant might in the future obtain, and which might be given him?

This tenant is so bereft of rights, that he must at all times be prepared to turn over to the capitalist all his material goods. The tenant is not allowed to admit anyone whom this capitalist does not like, but must always let the capitalist in to examine the stolen goods. Such a capitalist exploiter can be found nowhere, but in the Soviet Union.

The atheistic government boasts that it turns churches over to believers to use free of charge. But this is a lie! Paragraph 4 of the contract obliges the believers to pay insurance and local taxes, and

to pay six times the going rate for electricity—25 kopeks per kilowatt-hour.—These charges bring in huge sums for the government.

In this contract, only the tenant assumes obligations, while the "owner"—the Soviet government—assumes no responsibilities. Such a one-sided "contract" demeans and cheats the faithful. The faithful would gladly enter into a reasonable bi-partite contract, but that is not possible.

Recently, the government has come up with an even more rigid "contract". For the past five years, the government has been forcing parish committees to sign the new agreement. Some have signed, while others are trying to resist.

Neither church leaders nor the faithful were consulted in the drafting of the new contract. It is most regrettable that the church leadership itself never took a clear stand against this unjust and unreasonable contract.

The government, conscious of its own dishonesty and fearing sharp reaction, delayed the signing of the new contract for a number of years. The government keeps angling, as it were, to see whom it can catch first: Some it frightens with threats of closing down the church, others it simply deceives, or, it finds some pastor sympathetic to itself, who helps make the signing of the contract palatable, etc.

How does the new contract differ from the one in Stalin's days?

"We, the undersigned, residing in.....and making up the religious group called....., registered..... 19.....in accord with the determined procedure, hereinafter called 'PERSONS', and the Executive Committee of the Council of Deputies of the Working People of the city (rayon) of..... hereinafter called 'THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE', have entered into the following contract:

- " 1. 'The Executive Committee' assigns, and 'the persons' accept for use without charge the following property:
 - a. A masonry, wooden (underline which) house of worship, located at.....(address).....and enclosed by a masonry, wooden (underline which) fence;
 - b. Religious objects named in the attached list.....
 - c. A dwelling, located at.....(exact address)..... containing.....sq. meters of useful space, and the following

buildings.....(name them).....

d. Other property.....(list).....

- "2. The 'persons' signing the contract, assume the responsibility:
- a. To care for and safeguard the house of worship and other property assigned to the religious group for its use.
 - b. To keep the house of worship in repair, and to pay from its own resources the necessary expenses: heating, insurance, safety and other tariffs connected with the use and care of this property.
 - c. To reimburse the state for all losses inflicted on it by damage or loss of this property;
 - d. To use the house of worship and other property only for purposes of religious cult.
 - e. To keep an inventory list (book) of the property assigned, in which would be entered all objects of cult newly acquired (whether by purchase, by donation, or by transfer from other houses of prayer, etc.) so long as it is not the personal property of any individual.
- "3. The 'persons' agree at any time, except during religious services, to allow representatives of the Executive Committee of the Rayon (City), periodically to examine the property, to ascertain whether the religious group is making correct use of the property assigned to it, and to obtain information necessary to set the rate of reimbursement for the ministers of cult and other persons.
- "4. This contract can be terminated:
- a. If the believers using the structure terminate the contract;
 - b. If the religious group fails to fulfill the conditions of the contract;
 - c. If, in keeping with established procedure, it is decided to close the house of prayer (worship structure), the use of which was permitted by this contract.
- "5. This contract shall be drawn up and signed in triplicate: one copy to be kept in the files of the Executive Committee of the Council of Deputies of the Working People, the second in the files of the religious group, and the third in the files of the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs, attached to the

Council of Ministers of the USSR, for the Republic of Lithuania.

"Signed:

For the Executive Committee of the Supreme Soviet of Working People
The "Persons": Name, Patronymic, Address, Signature, of each.

"All believers of the appropriate confession have the right to sign this contract saying that they are being allowed to use the house of worship and other property, even after the religious property has been turned over, thereby becoming full-fledged participants in the use and discretion of said property.

"Each individual signing this contract has the right to revoke said signature, provided that he submits an appropriate declaration to this end to the Executive Committee of the City (Rayon) Committee of the Working People. However, this will not relieve him of responsibility for the care of the property and its safekeeping up to the time he submitted the required resignation." (Date)

In the new contract, the executive committee of the religious group is obliged to report how much the priest receives for religious services. Undoubtedly, the government seeks to introduce in Lithuania the system already in effect throughout Russia; e.g., Parents wishing to have an infant baptized apply not to the clergyman, but to the treasurer of the religious group.

The parents are obliged to submit a written request to have their infant baptized; they submit their personal documents, a certificate is made out and a receipt is issued. This receipt is taken to the clergyman, who then baptizes the child. The government is interested not only in how much the clergyman makes, but also in who makes use of religious ministrations.

Will private matters of conscience remain secret if they must be shared with all manner of treasurers and chairpersons, who are often people in the service of the government? Paragraph No. 14 of the Order of the Praesidium of the Supreme Court, dated July 28, 1976, grants the Executive Committee the power to expell from the list of the religious group anyone unacceptable to the government.

In forcing the faithful to sign the new agreement, the government obliges them to agree that "in accord with established proce-

ture" the church can be closed. That "established procedure" consists of unknown conditions yet to be determined by dictation of the Soviet government.

Who knows whether in a few years the Soviet government will not require, as it has in Byelorussia, that representatives of the religious community be stationed at the door of the church to turn back students and youth up to eighteen years of age, because otherwise "by established procedure" the church might be closed? The requirement to sign such a contract is tantamount to placing a noose about one's own neck.

According to the new contract and the new order of the Praesidium of the Supreme Court, the faithful, upon closing of the church, are required to surrender to the government everything, including the sacred vessels, which can then be placed on exhibition in museums of atheism or put to other profane use.

Is it possible to offend and humiliate the faithful any more than this?

There was a time when the government forced people to join communes, and hauled them off to Siberia, while proclaiming that Lithuanians voluntarily joined the communes, and that they moved to Krasnoyarsk on their own. Equally "voluntarily" now parish committees are signing this unreasonable "contract". So the Helsinki accords remain just a hypocritical document.

* * *

IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

Žemaitkiemis (*Rayon* of Ukmergė). June 6, 1976, in the parish church of Žemaitkiemis, the Solemn First Mass of Father Vytautas Kapočius took place. Taking part in the solemnities were pupils of the elementary school of Žemaitkiemis. Eighth-grader Roma Slaitaitė carried a miniature altar in the procession.

A week later, Teacher Ana Ulozienė and Principal Stasys Mišiušas interrogated the girl in school. The teachers asked Romutė who told her to walk in the procession, who gave her the clothes, and other details. The girl answered that she goes to church on her own, and on her own took part in the procession.

A class meeting of the eighth grade was called, in which the

pupils considered how to punish the "offender". Her classmates suggested that Roma be given a written reprimand, but Communist Youth League member Danguolė Šniraitė protested, "That is too little! I move that she be given a stern reprimand."

Roma Šlaitaitė had her conduct mark reduced to the minimum acceptable, while her file was annotated: "Roma used to be taken to church by her parents, and now the pupil is incorrigible."

School Principal Misiūnas is conducting a fanatical atheistic campaign. During Lent, all pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 8 are given lectures in atheism.

The week before Christmas, an announcement appeared in the elementary school at Žemaitkiemis, saying that at 9 a.m. on December 25, 1976 (the hour at which the Shepherds' Mass takes place in the church at Žemaitkiemis), the film *The Black Procession* would be shown. Attendance was compulsory; those not attending were threatened with lower marks in conduct.

The principal himself provided the commentary during the film, criticizing and ridiculing the Church, priests and faithful, as well as threatening children who were believers.

To prevent children from assisting at Mass on Christmas Day, Principal Misiūnas organized a trip to Kaunas.

His wife, Alfa Misiūnienė, who works as a medical aide at the dispensary in Žemaitkiemis, is just as bad as her husband. She visits uninvited the parents of believing children, ridiculing their convictions and threatening them in various ways.

Šiauliai. On Christmas Day, 1976, eighth-grade pupil Jonas Jurevičius volutarily left school after the first class and went to church. That same day the teacher sent his parents the following note:

"Dear Mr. & Mrs. Jurevičius: Your son John today, December 25, left after the first lesson, and missed three classes. Please let me know where your son was.

s/B. Šilanskienė,—Home Room Teacher"

The parents replied as follows:

"Dear Teacher,

"You ask us to explain why my son, a pupil in your class, left school after the first class on December 25 of this year. December

25 is a religious holiday for Catholic Christians throughout the world. Our family is a believing family, my son is a believer and, taking advantage of the religious freedom granted by the Constitution, he left class on that day, December 25, and was in church, since that is a Holy Day of Obligation for Catholics.

Father's Signature: Mečislovas Jurevičius

December 27, 1976"

On December 29, 1976, the teacher, (Mrs.) Šilanskienė, ordered pupil Jurevičius to remain after school. A "training session" began. The pupil courageously defended his faith and his rights.

* * *

Šiauliai. December 27, 1976. Teacher Jasiutė-Braziulienė, of Class Ie at Middle School No. 5 distributed a questionnaire containing the following questions: "Do you believe?" "Do you know your prayers?", etc. The teacher demanded that pupils write the truth, saying she knew everything about them. When the children had completed the questionnaires, the teacher examined them. She then made pupils recite the "Hail Mary", while she ridiculed the faithful in all sorts of ways. The frightened children would not carry out the teacher's order.

* * *

Šiauliai. Stasys Semaška, a pupil in Grade 4A at the internate of Middle School No. 2 is the only one in class who has managed to keep from being dragooned into the Pioneers.

At the beginning of December, 1976, Home Room Teacher Dvaronienė ordered Semaška to purchase a Pioneer neckerchief. A few days later, Mrs. Dvaronienė told Stasys to put on the neckerchief and to attend a meeting of the Pioneers. The pupil did not buy the kerchief, and refused to go to the meeting. The furious teacher pinched the boy's arm so much that it was bruised for three weeks.

Even though he had to suffer pain, Stasys was happy that once again he had been successful in squirming out of the clutches of his teachers.

Simnas. (*Rayon* of Alytus). On December 10, 1976, a retreat was held in the church at Simnas. In the evenings, school children

attended. Arvydas Patniūnas, employed as a militiaman in Alytus, noticed the children coming home from church. At the Bambininkai cross-roads, he suggested to a group of children and adults that they wait for a car, which would take them home.

The car arrived, driven by the militiaman's father, Algis Patniūnas, who works as Chairman of the District of Verebiejai. The faithful, suspecting nothing, entered the car. The chairman sternly asked the children where they were returning from. The children told him, from church. Patniūnas threatened to take them to their principal.

When they came to the neighborhood where they lived, the chairman put the adults out, but he took the children to the principal. The Principal (Mrs. Stakvilevičienė) and the chairman began to interrogate the frightened children. The youngsters did not deny that they had been to church.

The chairman asked what they did in church, what they were praying from, and demanded to be shown their prayer-books. All seven children complied.

The Principal Stakvilevičienė sought to force Lina Šmitaitė to tell whether she had taken part in the procession. The girl, terrified, kept silent.

The chairman warned the children that their parents would now suffer, while the principal insulted the pupils in various ways. Finally, they allowed the frightened youngsters go home.

* * *

Palanga. At the beginning of the school year, 1976, Home-room Teacher Juknaitienė, of Grade 2 of the Middle School of Palanga, asked her pupils who of them believed in God, who went to church, and who prayed, who taught them prayers, and who took them to church.

The whole class acknowledged that they believed in God, went to church with their parents, and prayed. Most of them said that they had received First Holy Communion. The smallest pupil in class admitted, "I don't go to confession yet, but Mother has already bought me a catechism and I'm going to start learning right away."

The teacher, Mrs. Juknaitienė, became frightened. Summoning the parents to a conference, she said, "I thought that your children have no concept of God or the Church, but it looks as though they

are all believers, and even go to confession. I'm going to do everything possible, to make your children grow up atheists."

"Try it, it's doubtful that you will succeed," a voice was heard to say from the audience.

* * *

Krakės. On November 13, 1976, the principal of the middle school at Krakės and the teacher, (Mrs.) Ručinskienė summoned the mother of Pupil G. Stankevičius, of Grade 7A and berrated her for allowing her son to serve at Mass.

At the same time, pupil Kulčinskas, of Grade 8-C was caught last Holy Saturday breaking the windows of the church in Krakiai. In this case neither the school principal nor the atheist teacher Kučinskienė took any steps to see that their pupil have the broken church windows repaired.

Moreover, there are seven pupils at the middle school in Krakiai on the roster of the militia's children's home for disorderliness, among them three girls.

It would be better for the administration of the middle school to combat real evil, instead of persecuting children who are religious believers.

* * *

Mišučiai (*Rayon* of Šilalė). In the elementary school of Mišučiai, the children are forced to join the Pioneers. Those who refuse receive no subsidy, even though they are in great need of it.

Principal Vanda Bačkauskienė and Teacher Bronė Urbonienė, prior to the Revolution holiday, were distributing gifts to children who had joined the Pioneers: jackets, shoes, coats, etc. That school is attended by three orphans of the Ramonaitis family. They, too, were pressured to join the Pioneers. The children refused. Teacher Urbonienė showed the youngsters the gifts and said, "Sleep on it. If you join the Pioneers, there will be gifts, and you will get lunch; if not, we will give you nothing, because we give only to Soviet citizens."

The children, however, were not to be bribed. They would rather go hungry and ragged, but remain loyal to their sacred convictions.

In the morning, the orphans were met on their arrival at school by Mrs. Urbonienė, with gifts and an application in her hands.

Hearing the same reply, the teacher hurled the overshoes into the corner and angrily shouted, "Take them, stupid!"

No snack was provided for the children, even though they must walk four kilometers from home to school, but it was provided for Pioneers living right by the school.

* * *

Renava (*Rayon* of Mažeikiai). On January 13, 1977, Juozas Jonušas was being buried in Renava. Approximately twenty pupils attended the funeral with wreaths and flowers. Having placed the wreaths and flowers by the casket, the children were escorted from church by the teacher who had accompanied them. The weather was cold, but the children had to shiver outside, watching the services through a crack in the church door.

The same situation exists all over Lithuania. During funerals, school-children are forbidden to take part in the services.

* * *

Mažeikiai. In 1975, Mr. & Mrs. Skiparas, both teachers, were discharged because their son had entered the seminary to study for the priesthood. This year, their daughter, Audronė Skiparytė, was discharged from her position as teacher in the kindergarten. How serious the "crime" of the son, that on his account his parents and his sister are punished!

* * *

Panevėžys. School children are forced to answer questionnaires like the following every year:

(Replies of one student at the Panevėžys School of Nursing to a questionnaire)

1. Your age? — Twenty.
2. What kind of literature interests you most? — The kind in which there are no lies.
3. What atheistic literature have you read? — I do not read atheistic literature.
4. What atheistic films have you seen? — None.
5. Do you believe in God? — I do.
6. Do you doubt his existence? — I do not.
7. If you believe, give your reasons. — How can I not believe in God, when all of nature, the whole world, shows His existence?

8. Do your parents believe? — Yes.
9. Do you observe religious holidays? Which? — I observe all of them.
10. Do you agree with atheistic activities against religion in our country? — I do not.
11. In your opinion, is religion eternal, or will there come a time when it will disappear? — It is eternal.
12. Give your suggestions and comments. — In my opinion it is unnecessary and meaningless to fill out such questionnaires. This is crass interference in private matters of conscience, when even the Constitution proclaims freedom of conscience.

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE *CHRONICLE OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA*

*Imbradas. Sixteen years since the death of the Rev. Pastor,
Father V. Šamšonas.*

Ten kilometers from Zarasai in the direction of Obeliai is the village of Imbradas. The wooden church is surrounded with the graves of village ancestors. Among them rest the remains of priests. The last pastor was buried there sixteen years ago. Marking his grave is a stone cross with the inscription:

R.I.P. Father Vytautas Antanas Šamšonas

August 17, 1912 - January 28, 1961

The boundless love of the Lord grant him peace.

To the Pastor of Imbrada of many years,

From his grateful parishioners.

He was so young—barely forty-eight—when death took him from his work!

The pastor loved his people, and the people their pastor. The pastor lived with his mother, who kept house for him. It was January 28, 1961. The pastor asked his mother to heat some water for a shampoo, while he went to church to pray.

When he failed to return, the mother summoned the sexton and went to look for him. To their surprise, they found the pastor lying dead in a pool of blood. The government spread the rumor that the pastor had committed suicide by jumping through a hole in the ceiling. (True, the ceiling was soiled, but from underneath.) The

veins of both wrists were severed (In the opinion of physicians, a person could not do this to himself) and his skull was fractured.

The pastor was from the Parish of Papiliai. He had studied for the priesthood at the seminary in Kaunas. He was a well-educated, serious, and decorous priest. Recently, he had been summoned by the KGB many times.

A small detail: A few years after the death of Father Samsonas, the security people summoned an old priest living in Pasvalys, a Doctor of Philosophy, to the military commissariate, and there inquired how Father Samsonas died... Even after several years, they have no peace...

Liquidation of the Catholic Parish of Žalioji.

During the last war, in 1941, the wooden church at Žalioji burned down. The chairman of the parish committee, Kazys Mažeika, requested Bishop A. Karosas to assign a pastor to Žalioji.

The newly appointed pastor, Father K. Garmus, set up a church in the living-room of the stone rectory, which functioned as such until 1963.

On January 2, 1963, the Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, Stasys Rogovas, with some local atheists, closed the church at Žalioji and forbade the parish committee to make any appeal. Vice Chairman Rogovas even threatened the parish committee chairman with jail.

The faithful of Žalioji went to Deputy Rugienis of the Council for Religious Affairs, in Vilnius, and to Moscow, but everywhere they received the same answer—Decisions regarding the parish at Žalioji were to be made by the local authorities.

On May 15, 1963, Chairman Mekšriūnas of the District of Angalai, with the assistance of the militia, seized the seal of the parish from Chairman Mažeika of the parish committee. The church was converted into a flour exchange, but the people hardly ever patronized it.

More recently, when the faithful of Slabadai demanded that their religious community be registered, the experimental farm of Rumokai, upon instructions from the government, set up a mill in the church of Žalioji. It is interesting that even people who are not too strong in their faith refuse to patronize the mill.

When will the wrong perpetrated upon the faithful of the parish of Žalioji be redressed?

DO NOT FORGET!

Petras Pliumpa, Povilas Petronis, Juozas Gražys, Nijolė Sadūnaitė, Sergei Kovalev, Vladas Lapienis, J. Matulionis, and Ona Pranckūnaitė bear the chains of incarceration in order that you might breathe and believe, in freedom.

* * *

THANKS!

With the help of God, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* has for five years been witnessing with facts to the whole world about the present plight of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. We thank all the known and unknown supporters, co-workers and distributors of the *Chronicle* in the homeland and throughout the world.

The Editors

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