

The image features a vibrant red background with a white, torn paper effect in the center. The text is printed in a red, serif font on the white area.

CHRONICLE OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA
No. 27

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IN LITHUANIA

No. 27

A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original,
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ RAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA No. 27
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today

Translation Editor: Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
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Introduction

In 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania by force, 85.5% of the country's more than 3 million inhabitants were Roman Catholic, 4.5% Protestant, 7.3% Jewish, 2.4% Orthodox and 0.2% of other persuasions.

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

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

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

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

On June 27, 1940, the Church was declared separate from the state, and the representative of the Holy See was expelled.

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

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

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

ecclesiastical forms of administration. In reality, all decisions are made by the state-appointed Deputy for Religious Affairs—an atheist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Translation Editor

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IN LITHUANIA No. 27

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A FRESH BREEZE OR NEW TRICKS?

To a casual observer, it might appear that fresh breezes have begun to blow in the Catholic Church of Lithuania. In January, 1977, the Deputy of the Council for Religious Affairs, P. Makarcov, warned Party activists in Lithuania to treat priests more politely; and leaving for Moscow, he spoke of the easing of government policy with regard to the Church.

Before Easter, the authorities of the City of Šiauliai allowed the ringing of the bells of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, after twenty years.

At the end of January, 1977, the principal Mass on the occasion of the jubilee of the Servant of God, Bishop Jurgis Matulevičius, was celebrated by the exiled Bishop of Kaišiadorys, Vincentas Sladkevičius. A few years ago, on the occasion of the anniversary, even registered priests celebrated Mass in the sacristy at Marijampolė.

Priests in many places teach children catechism openly, with the government content to levy fines. No one speaks of trials such as those

of Father Šeškevičius, Father Zdebskis, or Father Bubnis, nor does anyone believe that they could take place at this time

What is the significance of all this?

Perhaps the Soviet government is demonstrating good will, and beginning to live up to what is written in the Constitution of the USSR and in the laws ascribed to international agreements: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and elsewhere—things talked about for nineteen years, but never effected.

Perhaps it means the repeal of "untimely methods", which evoked a reaction from believers?

Perhaps it is a small victory for all those struggling for human rights, in Lithuania, in the Soviet Union, and throughout the world, since the Soviet government, with its ruthless administrative measures, has compromised itself rather badly throughout the world, and damaged the progress of its foreign policy?

Or perhaps this is a routine trick of the Soviet government prior to the Conference of European nations at Belgrade, where it will be assessed how the Helsinki Accords are being carried out?

The near future will provide accurate answers to these questions. However, even now it is quite clear that the Soviet government is not acting in good faith. The diminution of the persecution of the Church is merely a tactical maneuver by the Communist Party. If foreign governments to whom the USSR is bound by economic ties, for instance that of Jimmy Carter in the U.S., fight for the implementation of human rights, if the mass media of the world publicize how in the Soviet Union international agreements regarding human rights are shattered, then this temporary maneuver of the Communist Party in easing the persecution of the faithful could last for a very long time.

The lack of good faith is demonstrated by many facts in the Soviet Union. For more than thirty years the atheist government has been persecuting priests and faithful, basing its actions on secret instructions, which it kept from public view. On July 28, 1976 the Praesidium of the Supreme Court of the Lithuanian SSR made those instructions the law of the land, drastically curtailing the rights of believers. We can take no comfort in the fact that the aforementioned instruction of the Praesidium of the Supreme Court is so far still only on paper, because any day it can be implemented with all strictness.

On January 19, 1977, Vice Chairman Makarcevas of the Council

for Religious Affairs instructed Party activists how to improve atheistic propaganda, and how to strengthen the monitoring of laws concerning religious cults.

The Soviet government occasionally allows the reprinting of prayerbooks which the Catholics need, knowing that if they are not allowed to be printed in the open, they will be printed underground.

Catholics have been allowed to publish one or two religious books which hardly reached the masses of the faithful, either because of limited editions, or because they were intended for priests; e.g., *The Ritual*, *The Decrees of the Second Vatican Council*, etc.

The government also allowed the Catholics of Lithuania to receive the Holy Father's gift of Latin breviaries and Missals. The Soviet government knows that these books will not improve the religious knowledge of the faithful, since the Latin texts make impossible the full participation of the faithful in the Sacrifice of the Mass. This car-load of religious publications sent from the Vatican certainly served the purposes of atheistic propaganda.

The Catholics of Lithuania are not allowed to publish the kind of religious literature which would acquaint the faithful with the basic truths of their religion, e.g., for thirty years after the war, the leadership of the Catholic Church in Lithuania was unable to obtain permission from the Soviet government to publish a catechism. The catechism appears exceedingly dangerous to the Soviet government, because it would be read by children and young adults, who must not learn anything about their faith.

The Soviet government has increased the number of those allowed to enter the seminary, but at the same time it has stepped up efforts to cripple seminarians spiritually. These efforts to recruit seminarians as spies and traitors show clearly enough the "good will" of the Soviet government. "Be a good priest, but help the atheists to destroy the Church," they say. One has to wonder and thank Divine Providence, that in spite of these massive efforts by the KGB, the seminary still produces many good priests, of whom the faithful can only be proud.

Some day the priests of Lithuania will write their memoirs concerning the price they paid to resist the efforts of the KGB, and not become grave-diggers of their nation and their Church.

Easing the persecution of the Church did not hurt the atheistic government much. In the first place, many priests and faithful, having experienced the heavy hand of persecution, have been disoriented in the present situation, and are not struggling to regain

lost positions: to catechize children openly, to ring church bells, to make pastoral home visitations, to recruit young people for active participation in religious services, etc. To this day there are in Lithuania priests who are afraid to let boys serve Mass, or to participate in processions, e.g., at St. Anthony's Church in Kaunas, in the churches of Šiauliai, etc. To this day, some priests report to the *rayon* administration when there are to be religious festivals, or even retreats, and request permission of the administration of the *rayon* for a few priests to come in.

Other priests fail to make use of pastoral resources which the *rayon* administration does not even forbid. For example in Kaunas, at the Church of the Resurrection, on Sunday evenings they do not even preach, even though large numbers of the faithful come to services. There are pastors who on the occasion of a funeral will not preach themselves, nor will they allow the assistant to preach. Diocesan chanceries take little interest in such matters, and fail to warn the transgressors.

The faithful, especially the educated, are overcome with fear of practicing their religion openly, of rearing their children Catholic, and refusing to submit to lies or pressure.

There is no doubt that the "good will" of the Soviet government would dissipate in a moment, if priests and faithful took firm steps to revitalize religious life. Those parishes, where youngsters begin actively to go to church, begin to experience various difficulties.

In the present situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, we urge all priests and faithful to shake off their fear and to struggle for the right to believe and to live in freedom.

We thank our brothers abroad for their active efforts to help the persecuted Church of Lithuania. We especially thank the young Lithuanians, about whose efforts to help their fellow countrymen in the homeland, we often hear about by radio.

We ask the governments of all nations to follow the example of U.S. President Jimmy Carter in constantly reminding the government of the Soviet Union to respect the rights of its citizens.

We especially ask our brethren abroad and all friends of Lithuania in the free world to bring up at the Belgrade Conference and on other occasions the question of the infringement of human

rights in Lithuania, making use of the material in the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

Truth, freedom and humanism must triumph.

The Editors
*The Chronicle of the Catholic Church
in Lithuania*

TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

Dear Man of the Land!

With wonder and astonishment we are following the course of your star. We rejoice that for once in the arcane realm of politics, a personality has appeared who believes in God, and who respects human dignity and supreme duty. We salute a nation which is embodied in such a president. May God assist you!

March, 1977

Political Prisoners of Permė, USSR

E. Sverstiuk

S. Kovalev

P. Plumpa

K. Mendelev

RAIDS AND ARRESTS

April 19, 1977, at about 9 a.m., Antanas Miklyčius, residing in Kaunas, at Linkuvos 77-g, was taken from work and brought home, where a search warrant was served on him, and according to the directions of Senior Major for Interrogation Markevičius, a search was made of his apartment, basement and storage space. In charge of the search was Senior Lt. Gavėnas.

The search required about seven hours. Taking part in it were four security agents and two witnesses. Seized in the course of the search were a notebook and three books: *At the Cross of Hope, Excerpts from the History of the Church and the Popes*, "Diary" (typed pages), *The Metropolitan Archbishop of Kaunas* (pages), the article by Girnius entitled "History Repeats Itself", etc.

After the search Antanas Miklyčius was taken to Security for questioning.

April 19, security agents brought Jonas Rupšys home from work, and having shown him a warrant with Major Markevičius' signature, carried out a search at his home. The security people were looking for *Aušra* [another Lithuanian samizdat—Transl. Note], and for the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, as well as other illegal publications. The search took two hours; seized during the search were the book, "*Sielos Kultūra (Culture of the Soul)*", and approximately twenty audio cassettes. After the search, Jonas Rupšys was taken to Security for interrogation.

On April 19, at 6 a.m., an official alighted from a car, detained Dr. Povilas Butkevičius on his way to work, and took him back home (Kaunas, Molėtų 18). Here a woman and a man, who had come along, went to Dr. Butkevičius' apartment and introduced themselves as having been "sent by Alfonsas". When they had been allowed in, they showed their Security credentials and invited in five men who had been waiting outside.

A search was begun, which produced: *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church No. 25*, *The Chronicle of Current Events No. 40*, a typewriter and an article which had been copied from *Aušra*, on the machine.

During the search, Liudas Simutis arrived, and was also taken off to Security. The Security people took Dr. Butkevičius to Security headquarters for interrogation, but because of his poor health, they kept him only briefly. He was asked where he obtained the publications, whether he worked with *Aušra* and the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. They asked him whether on February 20 he had not been at the reception in Viduklė, for Liudas Simutis, who had spent 22 years in camps.

That same day, (Miss) Ramunė Butkevičiūtė, a third year student at the Kaunas Institute of Medicine, was summoned from classes and interrogated for seven hours at school, and for six hours at the Security Committee. She was accused of having attended the party for Liudas Simutis at Viduklė, and a meeting about the Battle of Žalgiris. She was threatened with expulsion from the Institute.

From the Džeržinskis loom factory, Vidmantas Butkevičius was summoned and taken to Security headquarters. He was interrogated about participating in illegal meetings and outings.

April 20, (Mrs.) Ona Butkevičienė was summoned from Middle School No. 25 of Kaunas and taken to Security headquarters.

She was questioned about objects found during the search, and threatened.

April 20, Security agents summoned Viktoras Snieška by telephone. The interrogation lasted seven hours, without mentioning the case in question, and without writing any report. They asked Snieška what tourist ventures he had participated in, who else had participated in them, and what was talked about in their course. They threatened to have him dropped from his water polo team, to keep him from going abroad, etc. They asked him whether he had read the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, or *Aušra*. They accused him of distributing these publications, of other anti-Soviet activities and of studying Lithuanian history with a group of friends.

The Security people asked him how he had met his friends, and even his wife. They said they knew everything, and that they merely needed a complete confession from the accused; someone was going to go to prison at any rate. Viktoras was released by Security only because he had to go to the Republic games. They threatened to summon him again from work.

On April 19, at 11 a.m. Sixth-Class student (Miss) Birutė Žemaitytė of the Medical Institute was interrogated at Security headquarters. She was accused of having been at the party for Liudas Šimutis at Viduklė. The interrogation lasted nine hours, during which time the student was insulted in various ways.

On April 19, (Miss) Elena Kilikevičiūtė and (Miss) Liucija Šinkūnaitė were interrogated. They were interrogated again the next day.

On April 19, there was a search at the home of Antanas Pačacka, after which he was interrogated.

April 20, at the Medical Institute in Kaunas, Fifth-Class student Aušra Kugevičiūtė was interrogated. She was asked whether she knew the Butkevičius Family.

April 20, Security agents interrogated at the Medical Institute in Kaunas Fifth-Class student Zita Visbergaitė and accused her of participating in Šimutis' party at Viduklė. The student denied the charge.

April 20, Asta Borisaitė a student in the 9th Class at the Middle School in Naujalis was summoned from school and interrogated. She was asked whether she knew the Butkevičius Family. Asta denied the charges against her.

April 20, at 10 a.m., (Mrs.) Danutė Berutienė, a graduate fellow with the Department of Light Industry at the Polytechnic Institute of Kaunas, was summoned to the Security Committee. She was accused of engaging in illegal activities. The interrogators presented her with lists showing who attended what meetings, where and when. The interrogators demanded that she copy the list and sign it. The interrogation lasted six hours.

That same day, Povilas Martinaitis, an instructor at the Kaunas Polytechnic Institute, was interrogated. He was accused of anti-soviet nationalistic attitudes, which allegedly manifest themselves at evening affairs. The Chekists threatened to bring Martinaitis to trial.

April 21, Šarūnas Boruta was interrogated. He was accused of reading and distributing *Aušra* and the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, and also of spreading nationalistic ideas, on group outings and similar occasions.

The interrogators demanded that he confess everything, since they already know everything anyway, and he would not go to jail for his tourist activities. Therefore, he could admit everything.

Juozas Dapkevičius was also summoned. The Security people made the same accusations against him. They asked him about tourist activities, about a New Year's carnival, etc. The Security people ordered Dapkevičius to report to the Security Committee April 27.

April 22, in Kulautuva (Komjaunimo g. 12), four Security agents and two witnesses (Miss) Birutė Vilčinskienė and Algimantas Vyšniauskas, searched the apartment, woodshed and basement of (Miss) Stasė Jasiūnaitė.

During the search they seized two copies of a 24-page typed pamphlet about Romas Kalanta; the pamphlet, *The Destruction of the Independence of Lithuania*, An Act of the Soviet Union's Policy of annexation, the second part of *Stories from Life*, which Miss Jasiūnaitė was writing, consisting of 620 pages of type-

script material for the book and four composition books full of other manuscripts.

During the search the Chief Deputy for Operations, Major V. Žarskis asked Miss Jasiūnaitė whether she received any honorarium for her writings. The suspect replied that her books are not published anywhere, and so she received no royalties.

"You're not going to publish it here—You're going to publish it abroad—in *Draugas* [Lithuanian Catholic Daily published in Chicago—Transl. Note], sneered Major Žarskis. However, the Major did not say what works and by whom, printed abroad, he had in mind. Miss Jasiūnaitė denied this vague accusation.

After the search, Miss Jasiūnaitė was hauled off to Security Committee offices in Kaunas for questioning.

April 19, at 3 p.m., Security agent Česnavičius and others broke into the apartment of the retired teacher of Middle School No. 7, Bronius Juška, at Banaičio 5-16, and without presenting any search warrant, began searching and questioning. They accused the teacher of disseminating nationalistic ideas. The Chekists are not very pleased because the teacher allegedly told his pupils about the Battle of Žalgiris. The Security agents complained, in astonishment, "Don't tell us you can't talk about making use of Soviet literature when you're visiting!"

SUCH IS THEIR MORAL CODE!

November 17, 1976, the administrator of the Catholic Church in Grinkiškis sent the Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Radviliškis, this petition:

"On November 16, 1976, Director Kirtiklis, of the Middle School of Grinkiškis, summoned pupil Rimantė Vaškytė and reprimanded her for visiting the rectory on several occasions. The Director forbade the child to visit the priest, and threatened to have the priest transferred from Grinkiškis.

"A couple of times two boys stopped by—I don't even recall their names—and Director Kirtiklis forbade them too to see the priest. The pupil Vilė Dauknytė was also persecuted. Now, fearful of persecution, the girl stays away from church.

"Parents are always complaining to me that the atheists of the middle school of Grinkiškis persecute their children, and that the

children are forbidden to go to church.

"Such behavior on the part of Kirtiklis and other atheists insults me not only as a priest, but above all as a person. To hear them talk, the priest is some kind of criminal, whom one can not agree to greet, or to engage in conversation, or visit socially. I know that there are atheists of such low culture, but the fact that teachers are such can only be regrettable. In Grinkiškis, some school children break church windows — I would not be surprised if they started throwing stones at me, a priest—that's how they are trained by their atheist teachers.

"I have never driven away anyone, young or old, who came to me, nor will I ever do so. And I think that neither Kirtiklis nor anyone else can keep me from associating with the faithful."

Father Vaicekavkas received no reply to this complaint, from Vice Chairman Alfredas Krikštanas.

On April 6, 1977, the Radviliškis *Rayon* newspaper printed an article by A. Milelis, entitled, "Imaginings of the 'Liberators' Overseas". Here we present almost the entire article, which illustrates perfectly the "truth" of the Soviet press—its bold-faced lying, and its scolding and threatening of people it hates

"As it loses the youth, the Church loses its future. For that reason the clergy and their church-mouse activists are going out of their minds trying by all means to attract teen-agers to church. Juozas Vaicekavskas, the pastor of the parishes of Grinkiškis and of Pašušvis, is no exception. The only difference is that Father Vaicekavskas goes around sadly moaning and complaining that the youth are God-fearing and want to go to church, but unfortunately, you see, the teachers won't allow them . . .

Somehow or other these complaints of the priest were overheard by the so-called "daily of the Lithuanians of the free world", the *Draugas*, which comes out of Chicago. This reactionary little paper in its issue of September 8, 1976, devoted much of the article, "When the School Falls into the Hands of Satan" to the relationship between the Rev. J. Vaicekavskas and the teachers of the eight-grade school of Pašušvis. From the article it is clear that the authors of the article, who call themselves Catholics, care not one iota for the eighth commandment of God, "Thou shalt not bear false witness". In place of rational arguments, they use pure fantasy:

"On October 24, 1975, during a funeral," writes *Draugas*, "the children were driven out of the church in Pašušvis. They were driven

out of church by the principal of the Pašušvis eight-grade school, (Mrs.) Jadvyga Baltraitienė."

Tell us, why drive children from church, when they don't go to church anyway. The great majority of our high-school students do not believe in religious dogmas, nor do they attribute any significance to religious ceremonies. As for the behavior of the Principal, Mrs. Baltrušaitienė, the scribes at *Draugas* fabricated this out of thin air, to put it mildly, because that day, at the time of the afore-said funeral, the principal, as a deputy from the District of Pašušvis, was participating in a session of the Committee. (. . .).

Father Vaicekauskas, obviously wants children educated not by the Soviet School system, but by the church, so that instead of trained pedagogues instilling the materialistic world-view, he, a priest, would tell them bible stories. This is why the article would have readers believe that "children come home from the school in Pašušvis, their eyes swollen from weeping, because the school principal and other teachers are constantly terrorizing the children, forbidding them to participate in church services." This figment of imagination is supported by the "fact" that on November 23, 1975, (Mrs.) Ona Vedeckienė, from the Village of Balandiškiiai, allegedly complained to Vaicekauskas that she had been summoned by the principal of the school in Pašušvis and warned that if her son Sigitas continued going to church to serve at Mass, his conduct mark would be lowered, he would receive a poor evaluation, and that he allegedly would not be accepted by any school. "The school principal intimidated her so much that the woman was ill for two days afterwards," the *Draugas* concludes.

"Were you really ill, Mrs. Vedeckiene?" we ask the "injured" party.

"I was not ill at all. First of all, I never spoke with Father Vaicekauskas . . ."

Vaicekauskas understands very well the powerlessness of religion, and so he tries to lure people to church with attractive promises and gifts. He feels a special sympathy for young girls, on whom he does not hesitate to spend more. One of them boasts of having received from the priest the gift of a watch, while another received expensive clothing. With notes and sweet-sounding words the priest gathered a small group of children to the rectory on the eve of Easter. Secretly, he was rejoicing to think how beautiful it would be when these children, like little white angels, would serve him at the

altar during Easter Mass, touching to tears the hearts of the devout parishioners. However, Vaicekauskas, like a true realist, also knew that if he were to let the children go home at that point, then he would probably not see them in the rectory the next morning. So he put them up for the night right there on scattered straw, leaving the children without supervision throughout the night.

Needless to say, this was a source of serious concern for the school and for the parents, scandalized by the priest's actions. This would be the behavior not only of every atheist, but also of every self-respecting father, and mother, who are concerned where their children spend the night. Such a strict stand on the part of the school was very displeasing to Father Vaicekauskas. Hence, in his sermons he more than once publicly vituperated the teachers, in all sorts of ways undermining their authority. He gets in the way of some parents, who are unwilling to join the flock of Christ's sheep. . . .

Such aggressiveness and clear interference of a minister of the church in matters not of his concern forced Aleksandras Kirtiklis, principal of the middle school of Grinkiškis to write to the *rayon* Executive Committee to have government organs stop Father Vaicekauskas.

This were the statement by Adomas Večkis, principal of the Elementary School of Kaniūkai, in the *Rayon* of Šalčininkai. In it he writes that his eleven-year old daughter Rimantė began school in Grinkiškis because this is the home of her 83-year old grandmother, Domicėlė Turčinskienė, who needs care.

The little old lady is extremely devout. Rimantė takes her to church and helps her come home. It was this that Father Vaicekauskas took advantage of. . . .

"If the local pastor keeps trying to ensnare my daughter in the web of religion, I will take the strongest measures to prevent it and I will at the same time request the Executive Committee to make use of Soviet law to prevent the corruption of the youth. My wife and I want Rimantė to grow up a patriot of her nation, without religious superstitions overshadowing her life," Večkis writes.

It has recently become known that in the control commission of the observance of laws regarding cult, Vaicekauskas was discussed and warned about breaking the law concerning the separation of church from school. So this is not the first time Vaicekauskas has had a run-in with government organs. A few years ago, when he was work-

ing in the Parish of Pajieslis, *Rayon* of Kėdainiai, conflict between the priest and local educators simmered.

At that time, Vaicekauskas went to the Commissioner of the Council on Religious Affairs complaining that religiously believing school-children were being persecuted by their teachers and the like. As is fitting, this complaint was carefully investigated by responsible officials. The allegations were not confirmed, and shortly thereafter they showed up in a libelous publication [*Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*—Editor] passing from hand to hand among reactionary church people, purporting to be true facts.

We recall that the national press a few years ago reported widely the trial which took place in Vilnius. [*Tiesa (Truth)* carried a very brief article.—Editor.] Here a group of the disseminators and supporters of this little publication [See *Chronicle No. 13* —Editor] The court abundantly proved the nature of their anti-state disruptive action, and those who were guilty received the sentences they deserved. We just recalled the none too distant past not because we are surprised by the statement of the priest to the Deputy of the Committee on Religious Affairs. This is a state office deciding and guarding the interests of various religion.

Nevertheless, it is strange to us how the second copy of the petition, somehow wound up in the worthless little publication mentioned above. Imperceptibly entwining itself with this is its publication in the newspaper of the "liberators" overseas, *Draugas*. From them the true face of the inimical Father Vaicekauskas becomes clearer....

Here it must be said that Father Vaicekauskas is not some old man "of former times", but as may be seen, the readers themselves, were becoming more aware from the earlier account, this was a young man abounding with energy. Several years ago, he completed the middle school in Radviliškis, and afterwards enrolled in the seminary of Kaunas.

The little old biddies of Radviliškis recall that Juozukas I "Joey" — [Transl.] was a devout little pupil and a zealous church-goer. So no one crucified him, like Christ, and no one dragged him by his coat-tails to an atheistic group. He freely chose the way of the clergyman; and he became what he wished to be.

Well, it has been an old hymn of the church-goers: to call "black", white and vice-versa. Such is their moral code!

To: Antanas Mikelis, Editor of *Komunizmo Aušra*
Jadvyga Batraitienė, Principal of the eight-grade School of
Pašuvis, and to A. Kirtiklius, Principal of the Middle School
of Grinkiškis:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have read in the Radviliškis *Rayon* newspaper the article by Antanas Mielis, entitled, "Imaginations of the Liberators Overseas". Maybe newspapermen overseas can make mistakes writing about the activities of atheists in Grinkiškis or Pašušvis, but the faithful and the priests know well what the situation of the Church in Lithuania is, and specifically in the parishes of Pašušvis and Grinkiškis. No less well do the local atheists know the situation. It is known that some of the more timid faithful of Grinkiškis and Pašušvis, to avoid persecution by the atheists, take their children to other churches. It is known that on October 24, 1975, during a funeral the children were driven out of church. I remember that funeral well: With the atheists chasing the children from church, the solemnity of the services was disturbed.

The very next day I took the matter up with A. Krikštanas, vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Radviliškis. After some time received a verbal reply from Krikštanas himself, saying that Mrs. Batraitienė had acted correctly, that children were not allowed to go to church.

I informed the faithful of the Church of Pašušvis of this matter. I am amazed that after more than a year, that same Krikštanas and Baltraitienė are saying something entirely different.

Jadvyga Baltraitienė and Antanas Mikelis, do you realize what those children thought about you, when they were truly driven out of church? What do those children, who have suffered one way or another for going to church think of you? In Pašušvis I have heard talk that the atheists are performing miracles: Jadvyga Baltraitienė, simultaneously participates in a funeral and in the session of deputies of the District Committee. I think, Antanas Mikelis, that you performed that miracle with the help of your pen, of course, at the instigation of someone else.

Both believers and non-believers are surprised that in the *rayon* newspaper I am being attacked because I zealously perform my priestly duties. That is my "crime". I receive quite a bit of mail in which both acquaintances and strangers encourage me not to be afraid. They say, that the atheists wish to silence not only the

faithful, but also the priests. They say, Mikelis, that your article will survive as a historical document confirming the persecution of priests and faithful.

On April 10, 1977, after Mass in the church at Pašušvis, (Mrs.) Ona Vedeckienė came into the sacristy with her husband. They apologized to me, saying that they never thought I would be written up in the newspaper. They complained that their son, a music teacher, had been discharged from his position. The Vedeckis' feared still greater unpleasantness. These are the means, Mr. Mikelis, by which you prove your truth.

At the *Rayon* Executive Committee I told you, and now I repeat, that the wife of Adomas Večkis visited me and told me that Security agents visited them and demanded that I write an explanation. Could Adomas Večys have written an explanation different in content? He could have, but he would not have taught after that.

The school is separate from the Church, but the children, the youth crowd to church; they want to be with the priests. Those who force their way past the barricades receive more than one blow of the atheistic whip. Those children, those youth who bear the scars of the atheistic whip in their souls become active fighters for the Faith and for the Church!

The rude tactics of the atheists do not attain their purpose. For instance, on Easter night, 1977, my confessional in the church at Pašušvis swarmed with little children and youth. When I emerged from services in the church at Pašušvis, a little group of youth came up to me and presented me with a bouquet of real flowers. Among them were not only girls (for whom, as you say, I feel "an especially great sympathy") but also young men, recently returned from military service in the army.

I am deeply convinced, Antanas, Jadvyga, Aleksandras, that you and other atheists will sooner or later have to lay aside those painful whips which you now brandish, and use more gentle weapons of war.

During sixteen years in the priesthood I have experienced many injuries from the atheists. All the priests I know in Lithuania have suffered from them more or less. Nevertheless, I have never heard that even one atheist was ever punished for persecution of the priests or faithful! Perhaps you atheists are the infallible, un-touchable caste of our nation, the chosen?

An ideological war is going on. I sincerely invite you: Let us fight honorably, as people fight, and not as beasts. After all, you

are convinced that you will overcome. In your hands are all the media of social communication: press, radio and television! After all, you conduct the atheistic war as you wish. We priests and faithful do not make use of such means. You are most probably impatient, wishing to do the atheists' victory dance on the ruins of the Church and the graves of the believers . . . You will have to wait—it's not our fault that we are alive!

At the end of your article, Antanas Mikelis, you threaten me indirectly with imprisonment, for "the face of the contrarily disposed Father J. Vaicekauskas" does not suit you. Contrarily disposed towards the atheists—is this not too great a wish?

This letter and the article from the newspaper of the *Rayon* of Radviliškis I am sending not only to you, but also to the Commissioner for Religious Affairs.

April 12, 1977
Grinkiškis

The Rev. J. Vaicekauskas
Administrator of the Churches of
Grinkiškis and of Pašušvis

To: The Chancery of the Archdiocese of Kaunas
From the Rev. Juozas Vaicekauskas, residing in Grinkiškis.
Rayon of Radviliškis

On March 17, 1977, I was summoned before Vice Chairman Alfredas Krikštanas, of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Radviliškis. He took me to Room 22, where a special commission had gathered, consisting of A. Krikštanas, Chairman of the commission, and members: Antanas Mikelis, Editor of *Komunizmo Aušra*, Vašutis, director of the financial section, Petras Vaičiūnas and Valentinas Paliūnas, and accused me of organizing a meeting of children on Easter night, 1976, in the church in Pašušvis, of writing invitations to the children, and that high school boys and girls visit me at home.

On Holy Saturday, 1976, after evening services had finished in church at Grinkiškis. I went to Pašušvis. About 10 p.m., when I had entered the church at Pašušvis, I found it full of adults, children and youth.

As you know, the Church at Pašušvis does not have a priest of its own. The people had been waiting for me for several hours. Until midnight I heard confessions. After that, the Holy Saturday devotions began and lasted until 2 a.m. When services were over, the people did not disperse, but waited for the Resurrection Services. At midnight there there was no bus, either. Mothers began asking me to allow at least the small children to sleep on the floor of a house belonging to the Parish Council of Pašušvis. The mothers themselves brought the hay, put their children to bed, and returning to church, kept vigil and prayed until morning.

This did not please the atheists of Pašušvis at all. All the children who had been in church that night were forced by School Principal Jadvyga Baltraitienė to write explanations. Some of the explanations by the children were read to me by Chairman Krikštanas of the Committee.

The Committee Chairman tried to convince me that I had broken the Soviet law, that I was supposed to drive all the children out of church. The members of the Committee agreed with him. When I tried to explain that I, as priest, was not supposed to explain Soviet law to people, and that I had no right to chase children out of church, members of the Committee began to insult me in various ways.

Antanas Mikelis showed his hatred in a specially public manner. He tried to show that priests do not observe the vow of celibacy, and that I am the same as anyone else.

"How do you know, since I do not go to you for confession?" I asked him. My question was followed by laughter from members of the Committee and sarcasm. Moreover, Mikelis demanded to know why I had discharged the organist at the church in Pašušvis, and why my laundress comes from Kaunas. They intruded in Church affairs in the most rude way, making fun of me after every answer. Petras Vaičiūnas shouted at me that I had opened a house of prostitution. The Chairman of the Committee tried to quiet down his colleagues while they were poking fun, but the latter would not listen. When I tried to explain myself, Commission Member Vaišutis shouted "Silence!"

Mikelis continued to interrogate me, asking how the article about the persecution of the faithful of Pašušvis had appeared in the overseas press. He threatened to write me up in the paper and to turn me over to the prosecution.

I reminded the commission that I had written more than once how the atheists are persecuting the faithful of Pašušvis and of Grin-

kiškis, threatening the priest, but I received no reaction. I reminded them that on March 13, 1977, as we left the church at Pašušvis, the faithful complained that Baltraitienė had not ceased persecuting children, that in school during a meeting of the parents' they forbade me from taking the children to church, and said that they would straighten me, the priest, out. Committee member Antanas Mikelis shouted, "I will take care of the matter, you shall be transferred."

It is impossible to write about everything. For a rather long time he lectured and scolded me, poking fun at me just as it pleased them. Finally they announced their verdict: a warning.

They warned me that if I did not cease breaking Soviet laws, I would be severely punished. They recalled the "offenses" I had committed in the parishes of Balninkai and Pajieslis.

If the cream of the atheists, the top echelon, acts like this, then you can imagine how the ordinary atheist treat the priest and faithful in Grinkiškis and in Pašušvis. I told my priest friends about it. We will not keep quiet!

To appeal to the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R. means nothing, for I believe that the aforesaid commission was acting according to the recommendation of Tumėnas. [Kazimieras Tumėnas, Commissioner for Religious Affairs of the Lithuanian S.S.R.—Translator's Note]. When I reminded him that I would appeal to the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, since I had committed no crime, the members of the commission simply laughed.

I am informing the chancery of the Archdiocese of Kaunas, that I, as priest, cannot perform my duties fully or freely in the churches at Grinkiškis and Pašušvis, because of the constant interference of the atheists in the affairs of the Church.

3/22/1977
Grinkiškis

The Rev. J. Vaicekauskas

APPEALS

A Statement by the Catholic Religious Community of Žalioji Addressed to the Deputy of the Committee for Religious Affairs. Copy to the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R.

The Catholic religious community (parish) of Žalioji was registered October 4, 1948, by Bronius Pusinis, Deputy of the Committee for Religious Affairs. It continued to operate until January 28, 1963. Despite the protests of the faithful, and the fact that the church was attended in great numbers by the faithful, the religious community of Žalioji was abolished and the church was arbitrarily closed by S. Rogov, Vice Chairman of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis. This can be confirmed by the priests and faithful of neighboring parishes. What an obvious offense against Soviet law concerning religious cults and freedom of conscience, to carry out all one's deceitful plans without the consent of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R., and moreover to send the militia, with District Chairman Makšriūnas, to Chairman Kazys Mažeika, to confiscate the parish seals!

The parish chairman, seeing the armed militia and the Chairman of the district, became frightened. Thinking that they had come to arrest him. Rogov himself had earlier threatened with prison anyone defending the Church. Before surrendering the seals, Mažeika demanded a written statement that the seals were being taken from him.

Chairman Mekšriūnas drafted a response and left it with Mažeika. Thus the religious community of Žalioji, although it has been guilty of no offense against Soviet law, was finally liquidated by administrative decision, with the help of the militia. What a brutal violation of the basic rights of the faithful! Based on the law, every Soviet citizen is free to decide for himself or herself his or her attitude towards religion and the Church, and not ex-vice-chairman Rogov. And with the help of the militia to boot! Why did Deputy for Religious Affairs Rugienis, and the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R. allow Soviet law to be broken, and freedom of religion and conscience to be repressed?

We, the Faithful of the Parish of Žalioji are bound in conscience to demand that our right be restored to have our own religious community, with its own executive body at its head, and to get back our church, which was taken from us. The Helsinki Accord, which was signed by the leader of the Soviet delegation,

Leonid Brezhnev, obliges all to respect the rights of the human being, and his religious convictions.

Žalioji, *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis Signed by 124 of the faithful of Žalioji
February 25, 1977

On April 19, 1977, two representatives of the faithful of Žalioji, (Mrs.) K. Bubnaitienė and (Mrs.) T. Kaminskienė took this petition to Deputy Tumėnas, of the Committee for Religious Affairs. After reading the petition, the Deputy asked why the seals had been surrendered, and why they allowed the church to be closed. The women explained that they had been forced to do so by the militia. The Deputy tried to explain that in 1963, churches in Lithuania were not being closed by force. At the end of the interview, Tumėnas concluded that the Parish of Žalioji had been treated unjustly, and promised to send a reply in May through his representative.

To: Comrade Noreikienė, Vice-Chairperson
of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Šakiai
Copies to: His Excellency, Bishop L. Povilonis
His Excellency, Bishop V. Sladkevičius
His Excellency, Bishop J. Steponavičius
His Excellency, Bishop R. Krikščiūnas
Dean of Šakiai, the Rev. J. Žemaitis
Commissioner for Religious Affairs Tumėnas
The Chairwoman of the District of Griškabūdis

A PETITION BY THE REV. PRANAS RAČIŪNAS,
PASTOR OF THE PARISH OF PALUOBIAI

On February 10, 1977, I was summoned to Šakiai to take part in a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commission on Observance of the Laws of Cult, of your *Rayon*, at which you presided. Also taking part in the meeting were: the Prosecutor of the *Rayon* of Šakiai, the Head of the Financial Section of the *Rayon* of Šakiai, Danyla, the Secretary of the District of Griškabūdis and some individuals unknown to me.

The first time the *rayon* authorities "lectured" me was several

years ago, regarding why I allowed school-age girls to scatter flowers during a religious procession. This question was passed on by the *rayon* authorities to J. Rugienis, Commissioner for Religious Affairs of the Lithuanian S.S.R. I was told that the girls could make use of the freedom of worship guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, only after they reached the age of eighteen.

Last year I was questioned by the aforesaid commission about the presence of eleven beds in the rectory of Paluobiai. I inquired how many beds, inflatable mattresses and folding cots Soviet law allows in a rectory. I received no answer to this question.

On the same occasion I had to explain why, without permission of the *Rayon* Executive Committee, I put up four panels of wall-board in the attic of the rectory without permission of the *Rayon* Executive Committee. It was explained to me that without permission of the *Rayon* Executive Committee, I had no right even to drive a nail in the church or rectory.

This time I was blamed for breaking the Soviet law regarding cult, I had on several occasions allowed a Catholic priest who did not have the so-called registration of a minister of cult issued by the government, to hold services in the church at Paluobiai. They demanded that I explained writing. In performance of that obligation, I reply:

The requirements and regulations forbidding a priest in good standing with the Church to hold services in a house of prayer is contrary to:

- 1) The Constitution of the Soviet Union, Par. 124.
- 2) Canon 1260 of the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church
- 3) Par. 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 4) Obligations imposed by the Helsinki Final Act on Peace, Security and Cooperation
- 5) For interference with the performance of rites of worship, Par. 145 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR provides a penalty of up to one year of jail.

First of all I wish to call your attention to the fact that in the new agreement between the Parish Council of Paluobiai and the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Šakiai no obligation is assumed, not to allow a person not having a government license as a minister of cult, to hold services in the church of Paluobiai.

The requirement to obtain permission of the *Rayon* of Šakiai to

hold services in church or the denial of permission to a priest in good standing to hold services is in direct contradiction to:

1) Paragraph 124 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union. The Constitution states: "The right of carrying out religious worship and anti-religious propaganda is acknowledge for all citizens. Notice that it says "all", and not just those who have the permission of the *Rayon* Executive Committee or a license.

2) It is contrary to the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church. In the Soviet Union, the Church is separate from the state, and so the right of deciding where, when, how, and by whom worship services may be performed belongs not to officials of the Soviet government, but to the leadership of the Church. This is confirmed by the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church (Canon 1260): "Only the ecclesiastical superior has jurisdiction over clergy performing the rites of worship."

3) It is in direct contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "Everyone had the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes . . . freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. (Par. 18) Hence any refusal to allow a priest who has not transgressed ecclesiastial discipline, to hold services is a clear transgression of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

4) It is in direct contradiction to the Helsinki agreements. The Final Accord of the Conference on Peace, Security and Cooperation, which took place in Helsinki July 30-August 1, 1975, was signed by Leonid Brezhnev in the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Part VII, entitled "Respect for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Including the Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief states: "The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. . . . Within this framework the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience." (That is, in accordance with the dictates of conscience, and not with the permission of the *Rayon* Executive Committee—my comment) "The participating States recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operations among themselves as among all States."

In Section X of this declaration, entitled "Fulfillment in Good Faith of Obligations under International Law, it states:

"The participating States will fulfill in good faith their obligations under international law, both those obligations arising from the generally recognized principles and rules of international law and those obligations arising from treaties or other agreements, in conformity with international law, to which they are parties

"All the principles set forth above are of primary significance and, accordingly, they will be equally and unreservedly applied, each of them being interpreted taking into account the others."

Hence, with these basic obligations of the Soviet Union to its own people and to foreign governments, which she has promised to keep strictly and conscientiously, belongs the right not only individually, but also with other citizens, freely to carry out obligations of worship.

Article 30 (of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) states:

"Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any state, group of person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein."

5) For interfering with the performance of rites of worship, the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR provides various penalties. The Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR, Par. 145, states:

"Interference with the performance of religious rites, insofar as these do not disrupt the public order and are not involved with designs on the rights of citizens, is punishable by imprisonment of up to one year, or to corrective labor for the same period of time, or a fine of up to one hundred rubles."

In explanation of this paragraph, Chairman Puzinas of the Council on Religious Affairs with the Council of Ministers of the USSR, in his lecture of August 5, 1965, in the courses on atheistic education for party workers of the Russian Federation says, among other things:

"Any administrative measure or other actions interfering with the free performance of religious ceremonies, may be used only in exceptional cases (during an epidemic or the like), and must be explained in understandable fashion to all, and based on the law.

"Organs of local government, in making decisions, concerned with religious ceremonies, sometimes posits formal demands, which are a serious obstacle to the carrying out of those ceremonies. In this category are **requirements every citizen to submit petitions regarding the desire to carry out this or that service, or to submit various licenses and other documents**, (my emphasis). The positing of all kinds of chancery — bureaucratic obstacles of an administrative nature has no foundation in law. Believers interpret this as deliberate prevarication and this only arouses their dissatisfaction and annoyance."

Therefore in strict adherence to the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR, this paragraph ought to be applied to officials of the *Rayon* administration directly contravening this law. It is not he who allows a citizen to carry out rites of worship who breaks the law, but he who interferes.

Moreover, in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference it is stated: "In implementing their sovereign rights, including the right to pass their own laws and establish their own administrative rules, they will conform them to their legal obligations according to international law; they will, moreover, pay fitting attention to the rules of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and implement them."

However, the order of July 28, 1976, No. IX-748, "Rules for Religious Associations", ratified by the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR, is a new, blatant act of discrimination against the faithful, expressed in the form of law.

As I have already mentioned, the Constitution of the Soviet Union as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right of everyone to disseminate his or her beliefs and to carry out rites of worship without any limitation. However, Paragraph 19 of the earlier mentioned regulations says, "The area of activity of the minister of worship, preacher or the like is limited to the dwelling place of the members of the religious association which they serve and the location of the appropriate house of prayer."

It is apparent that the authorities of the *Rayon* of Sakiai, based on this regulation, will want in the future to interfere with the free performance of the rites of worship.

Such a regulation completely ignores the strict requirements of Christ and the Church: "Go into the world and preach the gospel to all mankind." (Mk 16, 15) "Go then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples . . ." (Mt. 28, 19) Canon 1329

says, "It is the special and very serious duty, especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechetical instruction of the Christian people."

The aforesaid regulations of the Supreme Soviet completely ignore the gravest demands of conscience of Catholics, and especially of priests. Christian morality obliges every priest, regardless of any territorial boundaries, even at the risk of his own life, to minister the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and the Sacraments of the Sick to those who find themselves in danger of death. Such a prohibition, seen just from a humanitarian viewpoint, and all the more from the viewpoint of faith, is the most insensitive kind of disregard for the beliefs of the majority of the people of Lithuania, and even of the entire world, and the worst kind of ridicule of all believers, and especially of Christians.

The clergy of Lithuania see these regulations as a preparation to suppress completely the pastoral activity of the Catholic clergy and as a plan of the atheists of Lithuania to introduce a system such as that in the Belorussian Republic, where these regulations are fully applied in various places. The aforesaid official regulations of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR are a clear proof of how terribly freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are infringed in our republic.

Until the present Constitution of the Soviet Union and the aforesaid serious international obligations of the Soviet Union are repealed, Instruction No. IX-748 (July 28, 1976) of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR has no juridical force.

Therefore your requirement not to allow priests in good standing to hold services in the church of Paluobiai and to ask your permission each time to hold worship services, I consider unconstitutional, in contravention to Canon Law, universal human rights and the obligations imposed by the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, and juridically not binding on me.

If there is any further interference with the free performance of the rites of worship in the parish church of Paluobiai, which I administer, I shall be forced to appeal to the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, who signed the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. In the recent speech which he gave in the City of Tula he once again emphasized his determination to abide by the agreements of the Helsinki Conference and he mentioned that he knew of no cases in which those agreements have been broken in the Soviet Union. If he

becomes aware of such cases, it is difficult to foresee what measures he might take to discipline those who interfere with his policy of peace and detente.

Paluobiai, February 16, 1977

The Rev. P. Račiūnas
Pastor of the Roman Catholic parish
of Paluobiai

P.S. If you consider the argumentation of this statement lacking basis in the law, please show me this in a reasoned document. If you do this, I will consider your requirements justified and I am determined in the future to carry them out fully.

The Rev. P. Račiūnas

S t a t e m e n t

By the Rev. Sigitas Tamkevičius, Pastor of Kybartai
To: the Soviet Deputy for Religious Affairs
Copy to: His Excellency, Bishop Liudas Povilonis

Since it is your assignment as Deputy for Religious Affairs, to monitor compliance with Soviet law concerning religious cults, and your office has on several occasions reminded me to report any occasions on which my rights or the rights of the faithful are infringed, therefore I believe it might be best for you to know what is going on in the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis.

During almost a year and a half which I have spent in Kybartai, I was reprimanded approximately six or seven times by Vice Chairman J. Urbonas of the Executive Committee: for ringing the church bells; for boys serving at Mass, whom I was pressured to put off the Altar; because a crucifix was carried in a funeral procession while I, the pastor of the parish, accompanied the deceased on foot to the cemetery. The Vice Chairman told me that I could only sit in the car.

He reprimanded me also, because without informing the vice chairman of the *rayon*, I allowed a priest friend to celebrate Mass. This time I was required to explain myself in writing. Since the celebration of Mass is regulated by Church law, and Soviet law does not allow government officials to interfere in the

internal affairs of the Church, I did not write the above-mentioned explanation.

When I came to Kybartai, I focused my complete attention on repairs, believing that everyone would be satisfied and would allow me some peace. But this was not to be.

I brought home a car which I found; immediately the police showed up to see whether I had not perhaps stolen it. I began to erect a shed—and "cold war" erupted: investigators were sent to check whether the pastor really had a building permit, whether he was putting up the building properly, and whether he had the necessary documents for obtaining materials.

Vice Chairman Urbonas of the *Rayon* personally checked up on my building project, and the necessary papers, he examined all the nooks and crannies in the church, and even asked whether anyone lived in the church attic. It is obvious that only a rat could get up there.

The faithful followed all these inspections impatiently, and certain humorist remarked: "Father, the *Rayon* government really loves you!"

Since this blackmail concerned me personally, I kept quiet, but I can keep silent no longer, since the right of those are being violated, whose shoulders are not yet strong enough to take it.

In February, 1977, parents who hold religious beliefs told me the following:

On February 14, in Grade III-A the Middle School of Kybartai, Teacher (Mrs.) Miliauskienė of Grade II-A told those pupils who go to church, to raise their hands. The pupils were asked why they went to church, perhaps their parents forced them, etc.

The teacher demanded to know which girls participate in processions as flower girls. He ridiculed those who objected, saying that they understood nothing, and that was why they went to church. The teacher took down the names of all believing pupils, saying that she was going to turn over the list to the school principal.

In Grade VI-F, History Teacher Jurkynas ordered church-going pupils to stand while he asked them whether they really believed in God. Most of the pupils stood up. The teacher was amazed to find that sixth-graders were "so stupid" as to believe in God.

The following period in that same class, the homeroom teacher once more required the pupils to stand, while he listed those who owned up, and even interrogated them, demanding to know which pupils were preparing for First Communion, who was teaching them religion, and where they went for religion lessons.

Teacher (Miss) Šidlauskaitė, of Grade II-A told those children who go to church to raise their hands. Of thirty, twenty-one raised them.

On February 18, the Home Room teacher of Grade V-B ordered the children who attended church to stand. Almost all the children rose. The teacher made a list.

On February 16, Home Room Teacher Babinskas of Grade VIII-F asked pupils one by one whether they went to church, whether they served at Mass, how often they went, etc.

On February 15, Home Room Teacher Kazlauskienė of Grade VI-A gave her pupils a questionnaire to fill out, containing the following questions: "Do you go to church? Do you believe in God? Do you go on your own, or do your parents pressure you?" Then the teacher ordered those who participate in the church choir to stand.

On February 7, Zita Menčinskaitė, a pupil in Grade IV-B was interrogated by the principal, Mrs. Mrs. Bidukonienė. She demanded to know whether the girl believed in God, whether she went to church, whether she sang in the choir, which girls sang in the choir, who taught children religion, etc.

On February 22, Principal Bidukonienė again interrogated pupil Menčinskaitė about the church choir, inquiring how many girls attended. Mrs. Bidukonienė told the girl that she knelt before pictures and statues, because she understood nothing; when grown up, she would not do so.

On February 22, Zita Šiūraitytė, a pupil of Grade VIII-B, was summoned to the office of the principal Dirvonskis, and interrogated about the church choir: Did she sing in it? Who of the students sang in it? Was it only the pupils of the Kybartai school who went to church, or did others?

In early February, Principal (Mrs.) Eidukonienė interrogated pupils Kantautaitė, Sinkevičiūtė, Murauskaitė, and others, in an effort to discover who taught religion in church, who was in charge of the procession, etc.

On February 7, Vice Principal Sinkevičius of the middle school interrogated Valė Pudinskaitė, a pupil in Grade VII-A, demanding to know whether she went to church, sang in the choir, about choir rehearsals, etc. Also interrogated in a similar vein was Roma Griškaitytė, a pupil in Grade VI-C.

In February, Miss Salikaitė, a teacher of Grade II-B asked her pupils whether they went to church, whether the priest visited their

homes, etc. The teacher even asked those pupils willing to disobey their parents and stay away from church to raise their hands.

On February 24, Mrs. Gurskienė, Home-Room teacher of Grade IV-A ordered those pupils who go to church, to stand up. That same day, Mrs. Iešmantavičienė, Home-Room teacher of Grade IV-A also ordered those who go to church, to stand up. Those who stood up were told that there were more imbeciles in this class than in any other.

Parents who were religious believers came to me and asked what they should do. Perhaps they should draw up a petition? Perhaps they should go somewhere in person to seek redress? I tried to calm the people, explaining to them that Soviet law did not forbid anyone to believe in God, and did not give anyone the right to list the names of religiously believing students, the way they list hogs on the collective farm.

The parents complained that their children, who were religious believers, were being forced in school to sketch atheistic caricatures. For example, Art Teacher (Miss) Galvadiškytė told her pupils to write atheistic compositions and verses. "What will become of our children," the parents moaned, "Who is teaching them to be such hypocrites and to act against their own conscience? I explained to the parents that no one had the right to pressure believing pupils in this way.

I request you, Deputy, to tell me, whether present-day laws allow people to confuse children's conscience in this way?

On March 1, I was summoned by the vice Chairman of the *Rayon*, J. Urbonas, and angrily scolded for a half-hour for allegedly calumniating him and the principal of the school in a sermon.

Four times I asked him to give me an example of how I calumniated him, but he gave me no answer, simply repeating, "I will tell the appropriate person."

How is a priest to feel, when someone scolds him, without telling him specifically what wrong he has done? When I asked him to tell me what wrong I had done, the Vice Chairman simply replied that I knew perfectly well.

This whole uproar which the school administration stirred up in the school of Kybartai at the instigation of the *rayon* authorities, helped raise the religious and civic consciousness of the pupils, and their church attendance increased.

Nevertheless, such arbitrariness is not right; it is not right that

believers are unable to avail themselves of rights guaranteed them by the Constitution. One would like very much for the people of Kybartai to feel in a practical way that the Soviet Government actually signed the Helsinki Final Act, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, and the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights. I doubt whether the Soviet government would praise those who, by harassing the believing pupils in Kybartai, aroused the anger of the public. All the more, as preparations move ahead for the Belgrade Conference of European nations, where compliance with the Helsinki Final Act will be ascertained.

Also, I would like to ask you, Deputy, whether it is at your direction that the Vice Chairman of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, J. Urbonas, when he wants to reprimand someone, never sends a summons in writing? On the last occasion I reminded him that I am not his secretary, whom he can send for with a word, but an official person, who should receive a written invitation. The Vice Chairman told me that throughout the Soviet Union, citizens are summoned by the Soviet government only orally . . . What am I to think, after such a statement? I am led to think, with some reason, that some day Vice Chairman Urbonas will state that he never did summon the pastor of Kybartai, and never did reprimand him.

I have serious reason to think so, because the Vice Chairman once told me an obvious lie. He once denied that the church at Kybartai was burglarized by members of the Communist Youth League this year, even though I saw with my own eyes the Communist Youth League card of one of the culprits. The second occasion was when the Vice Chairman repeatedly asserted to me that Principal Širvinskis of the middle school at Kybartai would not be so stupid as to make a list of believing students.

I therefore request you, Deputy, carefully to investigate how the laws concerning religious cults are observed in the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis. If need be, the facts I cite here can be attested to by many believing parents.

March 16, 1977

Rev. S. Tamkevičius
Pastor of Kybartai

CONCERNING THE DISTORTED MIRROR

In the February 2, 1977, issue of *Tiesa (Truth)* we read an article by J. Baltušis in reply to a foreign journalist, the correspondent of *Figaro*. The article is entitled, "The Distorted Mirror".

Not having seen the article in *Figaro*, we find it difficult to judge how much truth there is in it. We must surmise that the correspondent, having looked around a day or two in Lithuania, was not able to form a more complete picture.

However, we were surprised by Mr. Baltušis, who is known to the public as a writer of great talent, who has depicted beautifully more than one page of our not-too-distant past, looked about in America with open eyes and seen there not just the trash, but also some bright spots, something which some other of our writers who have visited there were unable to do. His article, touching on various areas of life in Lithuania: economic, cultural, political, historic, and religious,—came out looking like a distorted mirror. This is clear from reading if only those lines which touch on the religious aspect.

Baltušis is upset with the correspondent of *Figaro*, because the latter writes, "The Soviet regime represses religion to a considerable degree (they have closed churches, seminaries, monasteries and convents), and those who wish to have a good job cannot practice their faith publicly." Why be upset? After all, this is the honest truth!

Perhaps our honorable writer does not know that in Vilnius, let us say, out of several score churches only a few are open? How would he explain why the rest are closed? Did they shut down of themselves? There was a directive in 1948, by which many churches in Lithuania were closed; not just churches, but also all monasteries and convents.

Baltušis knows that "in the City of Kaunas the former seminary for candidates to the priesthood operates to this day". But how does that seminary operate? The old facilities have been taken away, the present quarters are inhuman, the numbers of those studying are limited, the ecclesiastical authorities cannot freely choose professors or accept students. Incidentally, does Baltušis know that earlier, seminaries operated besides in Vilnius, Vilkaviškis and Telšiai? And where are they now? Does he know what a way of the cross must be traversed by those who wish to become priests? Is this not repression of religion?

Approximately twenty years ago, there was as yet no law prescribing a penalty for teaching religion to children. Now there is such a law. Is this not "repression of religion"?

At one time someone wrote in our press that new cities are being born (Elektrėnai, Akmenė), but that no one wants churches there. It is probably no secret to Baltušis that such desires are most undesirable among us. In 1956 Lithuanians in Vorkuta wrote an official petition to the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Komi, asking to be allowed to build themselves a little church. For this "self-help" those who signed were given quite a going-over by a representative from the center, and Father A(ntanas) Šekevičius once again wound up behind the wires, even though he had not signed the petition.

Around 1968 or 1969, in some camps in the Urals, an amnesty was declared. All sorts of criminals went free. The amnesty was supposed to affect Father Šeškevičius as well, but he was left behind wires. Once the superintendent of the camp stopped by and was gratified at how nice things were there, how clean and how orderly. "If only he didn't cross himself and pray, everything would be in order . . ." the superintendent replied to someone or other about the prisoner-priest. There is no amnesty for the devout! The person who prays is undesirable . . .

Father P(etras) Lygnugaris, having spent a number of years in the prisons of the Region of Irkutsk, asked officials, Why are priest in Lithuania allowed to work freely?"

He was told in reply, "There it is only temporary. In time, it will be the same there as it is here. Who knows, was the *Figaro* correspondent very far from the truth in writing that "the Soviet regime represses religion to a considerable degree"?"

Baltušis writes, "The church doors are open to every believer." This is only half true.

Let the honorable writer explain why a great deal of religious ministrations are carried out in secret, with the request that a baptism or a wedding not be entered in the parish registry? Why does the priest at times have to travel several score kilometers on a sick call, or to baptize an infant and always at night, when there are priests nearer by? Why do some of the faithful attend not the nearest church, but one farther away, sometimes several score kilometers distant? Why at times do the relatives and friends of the deceased come to church for the sacraments the night before the funeral, and do not go to the sacraments during the funeral itself?

Why are there instances, when the friends and relatives, who otherwise secretly receive the sacraments, stay outside the churchyard during the funeral Mass, or even outside the cemetery fence when the priest performs the funeral rites at the cemetery? They run out of courage in this land of "freedom" . . . Such courage is demonstrated only by communal farm workers, laborers and heroic intellectuals.

Such is our "freedom". No doubt Comrade Baltušis is acquainted with it. When some of his pen pals, e.g. his literary mentor, the author Kazys Boruta, fell into disgrace with the government and was shipped out to the Gulag Archipelago, our honorable humanist J. Baltušis never recognized them. It was only later, after the regime had relaxed its pressure, that he dared not to turn aside from his old friends.

Baltušis writes about the united will of our nation in joining the companionship of the Soviet nations. Why, then, were the sacrifices of so great a part of our nation necessary, splattered across the vastness of Siberia and cramming them into the Gulag Archipelago? Why did such terrible executions need to be carried out by Soviet organs?

Not long ago in the press (*Komjaunimo Tiesa (The Truth of the Communist Youth)*, 1977-51) it was written that during a certain soccer match, a good referee was indirectly accused of drunkenness. They took a blood test at the hospital, and the calumny was not confirmed. The man's reputation was restored by publicly proclaiming the facts in the press. However, such privileges are not enjoyed by a priest when he is attacked not by ordinary citizens but by government officials, falsely accusing him of drunkenness, so that they might take away his driver's license. He is not allowed to make use of medical expertise. He cannot hope to clear the matter up at any higher level, and his honor will not be restored in any newspaper. This is how it was with Father J(uozas) Zdebskis in 1976.

The priest is clearly discriminated against, like the Blacks in Rhodesia. Does this not constitute an offense against the faithful?

The mark of the distorting mirror is clear not only in this article, but also in his artistic creation, where that "prior judgment", which Baltušis imputes to the foreign journalist is felt to a sickening degree. For instance, in his book *With Whom Salt Has Been Eaten* (II, 47) he writes about the **Pavasarininkai**: [A Catholic Action movement — Translators Note] as "red-nosed freaks". To quote

further would be distasteful. At that time the Pavasarininkai was the largest organization of country youth, comprising 90,000 members (*Mažoji Tarybinė Enciklopedija — The Small Soviet Encyclopedia*—11,811). As a matter of fact,, there were very few red noses among them; today we have incomparably many more.

The older generation in the countryside today, which has borne many painful misfortunes, now conscientiously laboring in the communal farm fields, having successfully preserved their spiritual honor, —these are for the most part former Pavasarininkai members. We feel sorry for these people, so smeared by Baltušis . . . How to understand the writer's pen: Is this a stream of consciousness or a conscious denigration, which in the language of the people we call calumny? The poet Gamzatov has noted, "He who shoots at the past with a pistol, will be shot at in the future with a cannon . . ."

After reading the article by Baltušis, one's heart feels heavy and a painful question arises: Whose mirror is more distorting, that of the *Figaro* correspondent or that of the author of *Summers Sold*? It is too bad that talent comes mounted not only on an upright steed, but sometimes tumbles into a sled drawn by a lying ass . . . Worse than summers sold is a conscience sold!

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Sasnava

To: The Minister for Internal Affairs of the Lithuanian SSR
From: Citizen Bronislava Valaitytė, daughter of Jeronimas,
Residing in Sasnava, *Rayon* of Kapsukas

A P e t i t i o n

On December 17, 1976, in Lazdijai, I was detained by the militia and minutely searched. In its communication No. 2/13-V-8 dated January 27, 1977, the Cadre Section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Lithuanian SSR informed me that the search was demanded by a woman who had sat next to me, and had complained to Chairman Vaišnora, of the Executive Committee of the Committee of Deputies of the Working People of the City of Veisiejai that her handbag had allegedly disappeared and that she suspected me

of theft. This was a vicious lie and a calumny, since the woman who sat next to me on the bus that day registered no complaint with anyone.

On February 1, 1977, I sent Chairman Vaišnora a petition, requesting him to reveal to me the name and address of the calumniator, so that I might take her to court. However, he has not replied to date. Although one would not like to believe that this whole calumny was invented by Vaišnora himself, nevertheless it seems to me that a responsible Soviet official should not have the right to conceal calumniators.

I request you to require that Chairman A. Vaišnoras, of the Executive Committee of the Council of Deputies of the Working People reveal the names and adress of my calumniator.

Sasnava, March 12, 1977

(Miss) B. Valaitytė

To this petition, Miss Valaitytė received from Assistant Chief of the Cadre Section Z. Kalinski of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on March 29, 1977, Communication No. 2/3-V-7 as follows: "We wish to inform you that the name of the citizen mentioned in your petition has not been determined." In reality, during the search they were looking not for a stolen handbag, but for so-called anti-Soviet literature.

Biržai. March 30, 1977. The faithful of Biržai sent Bishop R(omualdas) Krikščiūnas of Panevėžys a letter, in which they complain of constant problems on account of attacks by the local atheists. In October, 1976, atheists stole from the church vestibule an artistic crucifix and broke it to pieces. After a few days, another culprit in church cut up the picture of St. George. In school, atheistic teachers terrorize religiously believing children. Next to the churchyard, they have installed a plaza, where there is so much noise, that one cannot pray in church. Juveniles ridicule those who go to pray, throw stones at them and curse them. This is what happened March 25, 1977. The faithful of Biržai also complain that the propagandist (Mrs.) Blekaitienė is always denigrating priests and all the faithful with the most obscene inventions and calumnies. The letter was signed by fifty citizens of Biržai.

Molėtai. On March 8, 1975, Albertas Skebas, a teacher in the eight-grade school at Mindūnai came to the funeral of the mother of Kaminskas, in the Village of Paužuoliai, knelt down and prayed. Shortly afterwards, Skebas was discharged from his position as a teacher and forced to leave Mindūnai.

Kirdeikiai (Rayon of Utena). In November, 1976, Rimas Kavarskis and Vidas Buivydis, pupils in the Sixth Grade at the Middle School in Kirdeikiai, began to serve Mass in the church at Kirdeikiai. The school principal, (Mrs.) V. Rastenienė summoned both pupils and asked them who had invited them to serve in church, how they were recompensed for serving—whether in money or with candy? The principal warned the mothers of the pupils not to allow their children to serve Mass, threatening that otherwise the children would have their conduct marks and other marks lowered, and Kavarskienė would be discharged from work (She works as a char-woman in the school dormitory.)

On December 24, without regard for the fact that on Christmas Eve priests have many things on their minds, and much work to do, their pastor was summoned to the *Rayon*. He was told that the Church did not have the right to interfere with children forming a true materialist, world-view, as long as they have not turned eighteen and cannot yet evaluate religion critically. Be satisfied with the old folks, and don't interfere with the children," Vice Chairman Labanauskas ended his remarks. Father P. Kražauskas replied.

Father P. Kražauskas replied, "And why do you not do so yourselves? Why do you not wait until the children reach eighteen before you enroll them in the Spaliukai, the pioneers, and you constantly ply them with atheism, which they do not understand, and are unable to handle critically?"

Kavarskas and Buivydis were still serving Mass after the New Year. Then the repressions against them began: Their conduct and subject marks were lowered.

Vilnius. In October of 1976, Vladas Lapienis was arrested. Up to this point he has been incarcerated in the interrogation isolator (Vilnius, Lenino pr. 40). His health is poor, he does not expect an early trial, and he asks people not to retain a lawyer, who would be of no use to him.

In that same security prison is (Miss) Ona Pranckūnaitė, whose health is also very poor.

Varėna. On March 22, 1977, the priests of the *Rayon* were invited to Varėna (Just about three came.), and they were warned not to teach religious truths to the children, and not to urge them to go to church.

On March 23, 1977 Chairman Baliukonis, accompanied by a militiaman of the internal section of the *Rayon* of Varėna, checked the Church of Nedingė.

Kabeliai. In February, 1977, in the *Rayon* of Varėna, a worker at the state farm of Kabeliai, (Mrs.) Birutė Kibirškštie-nė was being urged to join the party. She refused. Soon afterwards, the Party Organization Secretary of the farm, Viktor Shcherbakov, told her, "Make a choice — It's either the Church or your job." He then accused her of negligence at work; alleging that through her fault, many ducklings perished. And just recently, Shcherbakov had recommended her as an exemplary worker for Party membership.

Perloja. April 18, 1977, in the evening, the automobile of the new pastor of this parish, the Rev. Kazimieras Žilys, stood in front of the rectory. About 9 P.M. a window of the car was broken and a search was made. A briefcase was checked. All articles and books were left. On February 22, Father Žilys was interrogated at the Vilnius headquarters of the KGB. The interrogations centered around Vladas Lapienis. The Security agents regretted that they had not raided Father Žilys' home while Lapienis was visiting there.

Kaunas. Warden A.G. Zhurakov, of Permė Camp Vs-389/36 informed (Mrs.) Aldona Pluira, that her husband had his right to a short-term visit taken away "for transgressing the regimen".

Pociūnėliai (Rayon of Radviliškis). Chairman Meilus, of the Communal Farm *Tiesa*, learning that Vatican Radio had broadcast his blameworthy behavior with communal farm workers, is interrogating people to discover who transmitted the information, and threatening them in various ways.

Some communal farm-workers: K. Vainauskas, Kovoliūnas and others, who did not always go to work on Sundays, were denied by Meilus the right to purchase corn from the communal farm. Others, who in the estimation of the chairman are good people, he allowed to buy 200 kg. of barley. For a communal farmer that is a great

source of support.

The people fear the chairman and are quietly wondering when his arbitrariness will end, and saying that they do not know where to turn for justice. They all recall how, a few years ago, they took a complaint to Moscow, and later that petition complaint ended up with the chairman. For that they had to suffer much. Chairman Meilus is bold, because his nearest friend used to be M. Šumauskas, who used to let him treat the communal farm workers as his own vassals.

Slabadai. On March 23, 1977, Correspondent (Mrs.) Birutė Pavilionienė, introducing herself as correspondent for Vilnius, interrogated people about the chapel at Slabadai: whether anyone from the government interferes with people visiting the chapel. They especially questioned those belonging to the parish council. In a similar deceitful fashion the correspondent of *Pergalė* introduced herself to (Miss) J. Bušauskaitė, a pupil at the Arminai middle school. The faithful complained that the government took away the apartment, and when the priest came he had no place to change.

Arminai. March 21, 1977, in the Middle School at Arminai, representatives of the Department of Education of Vilkaviškis scolded pupil Ričardas Radzevičius for serving Mass. The pupil said that he would continue going to church, and serving Mass it is an honor for him. One teacher promised to come to church and chase the boy from the altar.

School-children in Arminai have begun to go to church more boldly. Not a small group of them actively takes part in processions and other religious ceremonies.

April 3 and 10, Teachers Jūratė Pėveraitienė and Kazimiera Kačergiūtė, of the Middle School in Arminai, disregarding the anger of the faithful, publicly wrote down the names of school-children who were in church in Didvydžiai. In the Arminai elementary school Teacher Aldona Matijošaitienė, an old atheist, is especially disturbed by pupils' going to church; she checks on them herself and organizes teachers to do likewise.

On April 4 and 5, 1977, in the Middle School at Arminai, the principal, (Mrs.) S. Mikėlaitienė, tried in all kinds of ways to force the pupils (Miss) J. Bušauskaitė to join the Communist Youth League. She threatened the girl, saying that without joining the Communist

Youth League, the pupil would not be accepted for any school. According to Principal Mikelaitienė, pupils who are not members of the Communist Youth League have no right to go on to further studies after completing Middle School. The eleventh-grader categorically stated that she would not join the Communist Youth League because she is a religious believer and wants to go to church.

Slabadai. In 1976, from the First Sunday of Advent, services began to be held in the chapel at Slabadai. The people gathered joyfully in their humble but beloved shrine. The people's happiness aroused the hatred of the local atheists. The Director of the Slabadai section of the state farm, a former fighter against the partisans Julius Strimaitis, said, "I will come to the chapel and shoot them all."

On December 16, 1976, J. Urbonas, Vice Chairman of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, notwithstanding his verbal permission earlier to hold services in the chapel at Slabadai, scolded parish representatives for the services and said that he would not confirm the Executive Committee of the Parish, and that he would board up the chapel. The Vice Chairman demanded that every time they wanted services in Slabadai, they were supposed to write a statement to the *rayon* government.

On January 5, 1977, four representatives of the Parish at Slabadai: (Mrs.) Ona Bušauskienė, Antanas Lukšys, (Mrs.) Pranė Butkeraitienė and (Mrs.) Valė Katkevičienė went to the Committee for Religious Affairs at Vilnius. They demanded that the Parish Executive Committee be confirmed. Those who went complained that Vice Chairman Urbonas made matters difficult for them and interfered with the services; e.g., he drove from his office people who had brought along a petition to allow services to be held. The agents of the Committee for Religious Affairs, K(azimieras) Tumėnas and Raslanas explained that they would inquire through the *rayon* government whether there are enough people to ratify the charter and to open a chapel. The people of Slabadai immediately presented a long list of those who had signed the expression of the desire to pray in the chapel at Slabadai. The people explained that it was far for them to go to churches which are open, since the nearby parishes of Žvirgždaičiai and Žalioji are closed. The officials tried to convince the faithful that if they opened the church, it would be necessary to pay insurance, high taxes and would be difficult to maintain. When the people demanded it repeatedly, Tumėnas said he would leave the

chapel at Slabadai to the supervision of the local government for an interval of trial.

On January 13, 1977, the people of Slabadai, gathered at their chapel to await the arrival of Tumėnas and Urbonas, the Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis, but it was in vain, because although Tumėnas came to Vilkaviškis he hesitated to come to Slabadai.

On February 28, 1977, (Mrs.) Janina Naujokaitienė took to the *Rayon* offices a petition to allow the Rev. A. Lukošaitis, pastor of Didvydžiai, to hold services in the chapel at Slabadai on the Wednesdays of March. *Rayon* Vice Chairman Urbonas allowed him to celebrate only two Sundays, and then crossed off the rest.

"You do not have the right to celebrate every Sunday," said Urbonas, "There is an order to allow you only two times a month."

"Where did you get that order?" asked the representatives of Slabadai.

"It's my order!"

On March 1, the people of Slabadai went to Vilnius to Commissioner for Religious Affairs K(azimieras) Tumėnas and complained that Vice Chairman Urbonas of the *Rayon* of Vilkaviškis is interfering with services. Moreover, they requested him to confirm the Parish Executive Committee. Tumėnas said that he would not confirm the committee, but that they could celebrate all Sundays.

The people asked Tumėnas to give the permission in writing, but Tumėnas would not agree. "Celebrate the way you have celebrated," Tumėnas reassured them, "and no one will interfere with you."

Recently the faithful of Slabadai have renovated the chapel and every Sunday services take place, but the future is unclear, because the parish remains officially unregistered.

Lithuanian, do not forget!

P.(etras)Plumpa, P.(ovilas) Petronis, N.(ijolė) Sadūnaitė, S.(ergei) Kovalev, O.(na)Pranckūnaitė, V.(ladas) Lapienis, and J. Matulionis are wearing the chains of imprisonment, so that you might believe and live in freedom!

C o r r e c t i o n

In the 26th issue of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* a few mistakes occurred: 1. It is stated that in 1976, nine seminarians were ordained to the priesthood. As a matter of fact, nine seminarians were ordained in the Cathedral of Kaunas, and two in Panevėžys. 2. The author of the verses, "Nor print nor writ..." is Bishop A(ntanas) Baranauskas, not V(incas) Kudirka.

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