

**CHRONICLE OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA
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CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA No 70

A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA Nr. 70
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today

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COVER:

Father Juozas Zdebskis, Charter Member of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in Lithuania, killed in an automobile accident on February 5, 1986. See pp. 2-17.

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Introduction

In 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania by force, 85.5% of the country's more than 3 million inhabitants were Roman Catholic, 4.5% Protestant, 7.3% Jewish, 2.5% Orthodox and 0.2% of other persuasions.

In the two archdioceses and four dioceses were: 708 churches, 314 chapels, 37 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 People's Diet "unanimously" declared Lithuania a Soviet Socialist Republic.

On June 25, 1940, the Church was declared separate from the state, and the representative of the Holy See was expelled.

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

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

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

Vincentas Borisevičius, Bishop of Telšiai, was arrested on February 3, 1946, and condemned to death after a secret trial. Before year's end, his auxiliary, Bishop Pranas Ramanauskas, was also arrested and deported to Siberia. Bishop Teofilus Matulionis of Kaišiadorys and Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys of Vilnius were deported to a Siberian labor camp. Archbishop Reinys perished in prison at Vladimir, November 8, 1953.

By 1947, Lithuania was left with a single bishop. Kazimieras Paltarokas, of Panevėžys. He died in 1958.

In 1947, the last convents and monasteries were closed, their communities dispersed, and all monastic institutions were outlawed.

After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a slight improvement in the religious situation. Bishops Matulionis and Ramanauskas were allowed to return to Lithuania, but not to minister to their dioceses or to communicate with the clergy or laity.

Bishop Ramanauskas died in 1959, and Archbishop Matulionis in 1963.

In 1955, two new bishops were appointed by Rome and consecrated: Julijonas Steponavičius and Petras Maželis. Steponavičius has never been permitted to administer his diocese.

Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, consecrated in 1957, was kept under severe government restrictions until 1982. In 1965, Monsignor Juozas Labukas-Matulaitis was consecrated in Rome to head the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of Vilkaviškis. Two new bishops were consecrated in 1969: Bishop Romualdas Krikščiūnas was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Panevėžys, and Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis was appointed auxiliary to Bishop Labukas, and succeeded him after his death in 1979.

In 1982, Bishop Sladkevičius was permitted to return to his diocese as Apostolic Administrator of Kaišiadorys. Father Antanas Vaičius was named bishop and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Telšiai and the Prelature of Klaipėda.

Relaxation of pressure on religious believers soon revealed that the Lithuanian people were still deeply religious. It was decided in the mid-fifties to resume the attack. The principal means of attack would be unlimited moral pressure, since physical terror seemed only to strengthen and unify the faithful.

In 1972, *the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, clandestinely published in that country, began to reach the free world at irregular intervals. Primarily intended to keep Catholics in Lithuania informed of the situation of the Church there, these Lithuanian *samizdat* also serve as a constant appeal to the free world not to forget the plight of a people struggling against overwhelming odds to defend their religious beliefs and to regain their basic human rights.

Rev. Casimir Pugevičius
Translator

Appearing since 1972!
Read this and pass it on!
If you can, reproduce it!

*This issue is dedicated to the late Father Juozapas Zdebskis,
zealous apostle of Christ's love, and loyal son of the Nation!*

CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA, NO. 70

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THANKS TO HIS HOLINESS, POPE JOHN PAUL II

Catholic Lithuania sincerely thanks Your Holiness for the attention you pay to the Church in our country, for your warm and encouraging words on the Feast of Saint Casimir, for your holiday greetings in the Lithuanian language, and your concern for all the affairs of our Church.

We would also like to express our deep respect and sincere dedication and loyalty to the Holy See!

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA LOSES ONE MORE ZEALOUS PRIEST

On February 5, 1986, the pastor of the parish of Rudamina, one of the founders of the CaCDBR (Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights), Father Juozapas Zdebskis, was killed in an automobile collision.

On February 10, the Lithuanian State Department of Motor Vehicles reported on the television program *Roads, Cars and People (Keliai, Mašinos, Žmonės)* that on the road between Varėna and Eišiškės, at the Valkininkai intersection, a *Zhiguli*, belonging to J. Zdebskis and driven by A. Sabaliauskas, crossed the center lane and collided with a milk truck. In the collision, three passengers in the *Zhiguli* died, and a fourth, R. Žemaitis, was injured. The cause of the collision was being investigated.

TASS, informing the world abroad, gave a different version of the collision: Zdebskis' *Zhiguli*, driven by Sabaliauskas, was passing an automobile, and crossing the center line, collided with a milk truck. At the time of the collision, Zdebskis, the driver Algis Sabaliauskas, and a woman passenger whose name was not given out, were fatally injured; Žemaitis was hospitalized. The driver of the milk truck, slightly injured, was taken to the hospital.

In neither report was the truck driver's name mentioned. TASS gave no information concerning the driver or possible passengers in the automobile which Zdebskis' *Zhiguli* was passing. They did not indicate a license number of the automobile, even though this automobile could have been the cause of the accident, and the driver a witness to the incident.

The shoving of Father Bronius Laurinavičius under the wheels of a truck, the sadistic murders of Fathers Leonas Šapoka and Mažeika, the liquidation of the Lithuanian Helsinki Group, the efforts to destroy the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights at any cost and the constant attacks of the KGB on Father Zdebskis, allow us to form the supposition that this collision was not accidental, but a carefully planned and executed act of violence; all the more because various obstacles were posed to claiming the remains of Father Zdebskis, as well as his personal effects.

After the collision, Zdebskis' *Zhiguli* was towed to the Department of Motor Vehicles in Šalčininkai and searched.

On the day of his death, the telephone of the rectory in Rudamina was

disconnected and friends learned of the collision only a day later. The KGB kept the whole funeral under special surveillance. The young men taking care of the funeral arrangements were brazenly followed by KGB automobiles. Even after they returned home from the funeral, the KGB did not let them out of their sight for a long time; wherever they went from morning to night, KGB agents followed them.

The authorities wanted to forbid the burial of the remains in the churchyard, but the grave had already been dug and there was nothing they could do.

Žemaitis, who survived the collision (all the passengers in the car with the priest were workers on the renovation of the church of Rudamina), while in the hospital told friends of the deceased about the collision, occasionally contradicting himself. He said on one hand that "It was our fault," and on the other that, "I don't remember anything." Later, they would not allow people who went to visit Žemaitis into the ward. "Those are our orders," the doctors and medical personnel said to justify their actions.

After he had left the hospital, Žemaitis wrote in the Prienai Rayon newspaper a panegyric to the Soviet friendship of nations and his gratitude for the medical treatment he had received.

At 12:00 noon on February 10, 1986, Their Excellencies Vincentas Sladkevičius and Juozas Preikšas arrived at the church in Rudamina to accompany the remains of Father Zdebskis on the last journey.

Participating in the solemn services were about 100 priests and countless throngs of faithful, the greater portion of which consisted of youth. During the funeral, Father Jonas Zubrus urged everyone to perform their obligations regardless of all difficulties; Father Juozas Užupis talked about the life of the deceased and Father Donatas Valiukonis spoke about current events: problems of believers' rights.

At the grave, a few words were uttered by the Dean of Lazdijai, Father Vincas Jalinskas:

"...My dear friends, I am very grateful to Your Excellencies, to my brother priests and to the faithful. I should like to say a few words, especially to you, my brother priests... As the executor of Father Juozas' will, and as dean, I examined his desk drawers and found them... full of little stones from the fields of Lithuania. Surprised, I knelt by the desk. Frankly, I thought then and I think now that we ought to bring every young priest to see and rejoice. How much 'gold and possessions' a real priest has! I understood what the true weight of the priesthood means -- he did not need worldly possessions.

"We kept a vigil beside your casket, Father Juozas, and distributed Holy Communion day and night. The altar was adorned not with flowers, but with living people, in adoration. At your bier, Father, youth kept constant vigil. I asked one frozen youngster praying in the unheated church, 'What did the deceased give you? Perhaps he bought you an automobile?'

"Sighing with tears in his eyes, he said, 'He gave me God!' My Lord, he gave you God!...

"And so I would like to say to every one of you priests 'Brothers,

what we sow. we shall reap'..."

A representative of the youth addressed the assembled participants at the funeral. "I should like to say a few words in the name of the young people. You don't have to thank us for coming! For us, this was taken for granted. We could not but come to Father Juozas' funeral. He raised us here present from the time we were schoolchildren. He taught us to enjoy ourselves in a wholesome Christian way. He taught us to sing Lithuanian songs, he attended our holidays and our song and dance groups. He shared our sufferings when we were summoned for interrogation on account of Christ, on account of Lithuania. He was an energetic supporter of the Friends of the Eucharist movement. We would not be standing here. We would not have assembled, we would not have learned to love the beauty of strict purity and abstinence or fidelity to the truth if we had not met Father Juozas on the path of life.

"Not by his own weak human power, but by the power of the Blessed Sacrament, he drew us to God and to the ideals of homeland.

"Father Juozas, in our association, you often emphasized the idea that everything God allows us to come into our lives He allows out of His great love for us, that even from the greatest evil, He knows how to extract maximum good.

"We all gathered here young and old we all feel in our hearts a deep wound. It would be difficult for us to understand that tide of hopelessness rising in our breast if we did not recall your words often repeated to us that a believing nation is guaranteed survival as long as it is suffering. And when a believing nation stops suffering, death is approaching. Looking at your casket in this way, we can understand and bear with this sense of loss. Dear Father Juozapas, when we look at your final resting place, this hillock in the Land of Mary which you loved so much, we are reminded of the recently published book of the Lithuanian poet Kazys Bradūnas, *Notes to the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania (Prierasai prie IKB Kronikos)*. With your confrere Father Bronius Laurinavičius and other martyrs of the Lithuanian nation in mind, the poet writes:

*"You who were pushed beneath the wheels,
You who were killed in the dark of night.
You who disappeared in the taiga, although unconquered -
Pray for us.
It is a bloody seal on an unproclaimed bull
By-passing heaven, you come home.
On the altar of earth lie the bones of saints
Pray for us."*

No less a throng of people gathered in the church of Rudamina commemorating the thirtieth day after Father Zdebskis' death. The Associate Pastor of the parish of Alytus, Father Antanas Gražulis, spoke fervently to the assembled faithful:

"Father Zdebskis was a great defender of the Truth, of Love... But was it easy for him? No! He had the same human nature as we. Father Juozas

once told me, 'You don't know how difficult it is... one would like to come to terms with life. I carry within me a great dose of fear, but when I pray fervently and make a meditation on death, I see where I must take my stand, in whose name I must speak, and then I understand that I am obliged to walk in the footsteps of Christ. And more than once, the desire has arisen to take vengeance on those doing wrong, but, O God, my knees which never buckled from fatigue, in this case brought me kneeling beneath the cross of Christ, so that joining my suffering with the suffering of the Savior. I could once again travel along the road assigned to me, I could, at peace and firm, stride along the road assigned to me.'

"Praying for Father Juozas, plumbing his life, each one of us leaving the church is obliged to make some specific resolutions. We all remember well the sermons he gave. May those thoughts, his saintly example and life, inspire us to self-sacrifice. Standing at the grave of Father Juozas, we understand that our nation needs not hypocrites or cowards, but saintly sons and daughters. We must learn from Father Juozas -- in difficulties, to embrace the Savior and to ask His help. We must learn, like him, to offer our daily burden to God as atonement for our own sins and those of others. We must learn to stand courageously in difficulty and danger under the cross of Christ. Let us think about it, plunge deeper, and walk the way of sacrifice and self-denial.

"The earthly journey of Father Juozapas Zdebskis has ended. May his blood spilled in the collision be, like the refreshing dew in a fallow field, for the good of the Church of Lithuania and the faithful."

"God let me bear everything that is burdensome like You on the cross, as a just penalty for the denial of Your love, for our sins and the sins of all." (Father Juozas Zdebskis)

Those words so suddenly and unexpectedly
Became incarnate in painful reality;
- Only yesterday you offered the sacrifice to the Lord;
And here we are today kneeling at your grave.
In order not to perish in meaninglessness,
In the world man must
Not only a spectator be.
His to go and tame the earth.
And soak his bread in drops of perspiration,
That victory and joy
And every single failure and pain
He might accept as a gift.
- Such is the pronouncement of the Most High!
To go where, sunken in despair.
Lost at some complicated cross road.
Your earthly brother calls for help.
And you hurried to where help was needed.
Where danger threatened lonely sheep,
That like the *Bonus Pastor*
You might join

Them all with binding ties.
 - Perhaps somewhere a soldier's bottomless fear
 Can be made light of by a military order?
 Perhaps some exiles' days grow long?
 Perhaps to touch your pain
 With one's own love? ...
 And so from north to southernmost lands
 With protecting hand and open heart
 You offered yourself as a sacrifice,
 For in your heart with sacred resolve you felt:
 "Tu es *sacerdos in aeternum.*"
 And yet across your path more than once
 Appeared the gateway to eternity,
 And the shade of unexpected death
 Would pass you by.
 And yet you always repeated to all:
 - The plans of the Most High are not the plans of men!
 It was not you the *great moment* was seeking,
 In your sacrificial chalice was lacking but one drop,
 And on the final page it is not written:
 Your will be done!
 I am ready, Lord!
 Like a lightening flash the final moment
 Opened to sorrow all our hearts.
 And like a constant prayer we repeat to ourselves
 - God only knows whether on earth
 on in heaven you are more needed?
 So we fervently pray the Lord on our knees,
 That in eternity's light you would be happy.
 That having felt again your help.
 Young and old would be blessed!

Father Juozas Zdebskis was born in 1929, in the parish of Mindaugai, in the District of Marijampolė. There were three children in the family. A sister died as a pre-schooler and two children grew to maturity: a son, Juozapas and a daughter, Marija. Juozas attended the elementary school in Kalvarija. In 1948, having completed his intermediate education, he entered the seminary in Kaunas. Here he spent five years of studies. On September 21, 1952, on the Feast of Saint Matthew, Bishop Kazimieras Paltarokas conferred priestly orders on Juozapas Zdebskis.

His first parish was Šiluva. Later, he worked in Raseiniai and at the Jgula church in Kaunas (currently closed by the atheists and converted into a picture gallery). While in Kaunas, he pursued higher studies in Theology. He served as pastor in Šiūpiliai, associate pastor in šakiai, and pastor in Kapčiamiestis and Gudeliai where, for catechizing children, he was sentenced to a year in prison.

Prison did not break the priest's spirit: he actively worked for the good of the Church. Seeing the sad future facing the Catholic Church in Lithuania on account of the drastic limitations imposed on the numbers of



Father Juozas Zdebskis (second right), with other charter members of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights (from left), Fathers Vincas Velavičius, Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Jonas Kauneckas.

those allowed to enter the seminary (at that time, only five candidates were being accepted even though approximately twenty priests a year were dying), together with Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, he wrote a petition in which he demanded that more seminarians be allowed to be received into the Kaunas Seminary.

For this activity, the Soviet government took away from Father Zdebskis and Father Tamkevičius their registration certificates and the right to function officially as priests.

Both priests were obliged to work as laborers in land reclamation for a year. Possessed of inexhaustible energy and self-sacrifice, Father Zdebskis continued, in the time he was free from physical labor, the work of the apostolate he had begun.

At this time, his activities embraced almost all Lithuania. The Soviet government, seeing that the punishment had not produced the necessary results, again allowed him to work as a priest in a parish.

Working in Prienai, he was one of the first in Lithuania to assemble children and youth, allow them to serve at Mass, direct closed youth retreats and to be a zealous helper to the Friends of the Eucharist. In Prienai, he was arrested a second time for catechizing children and sentenced to a year in camp. Also sentenced at that time for catechizing children were Fathers Antanas Šeškevičius and Prosperas Bubnys. (Reported

In *Chronicle of Catholic Church in Lithuania*, No. 1 Trans. Note)

After returning from prison, he served as pastor of Šlavantai. The authorities thought that a priest working in such an out-of-the-way parish would have no opportunity for broader activities. Father Zdebskis, however, would not stop: In the active struggle for the revival of the Catholic Faith in Lithuania and for the defense of basic human rights, he tried to involve as many priests and laity as possible.

In 1978, Father Zdebskis actively participated in the creation of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights and became a member of that committee.

When most priests sat at their studies and books, when in the evenings families gathered quietly around the dinner table, Father Zdebskis tirelessly travelled roads known to him alone. He seemed never to tire and never to stop... If he ran out of time to visit a sick person with the sacraments during the day, he would go at night. If because of bad road conditions he was unable to drive, he would go on foot... Often Father Zdebskis would travel hundreds and thousands of kilometers to be able to visit and provide with the sacraments young men serving in the Soviet Army or people suffering on a sick-bed in some out-of-the-way village, often elderly people neglected by their own relatives.

As a priest, he used to reach exiles in the depths of Russia. He used to bring the light of Faith to the faithful of Tadzhik, Armenia, the Volga Basin and other faithful who, because of the oppression of the Soviet government had been left with churches and without priests. During almost all the trials of prisoners of conscience, he could be seen at the courtroom entrance.

Unable to break the priest's spirit by trials, warnings and threats, the Soviet government took measures of terror against Father Zdebskis: Under suspicious circumstances, and by unknown methods, he was burned (some parts of his body suffered third-degree burns). Allegedly because he was driving after drinking (Father Zdebskis was a strict abstainer), his drivers' license was revoked. On several occasions, accidents were set up. A long series of raids and interrogations followed.

Father Zdebskis ministered to the parish of Šlavantai for eleven years. Lately he had been assigned as pastor of the parish of Rudamina, where he worked until his tragic death.

This year, Father Zdebskis would have celebrated his thirty-fifth anniversary in the priesthood, but God knows better what we need.

The death of Father Zdebskis deeply shocked the whole of believing Lithuania. The loss of every priest is a wound to Lithuania, but the loss of Father Zdebskis is particularly painful.

You will yet return...
... I like a sword-blow
the unexpected news
reached the heart on a sword's-point of pain...
I do not wish to believe my ears!
And how are we here...
without you?...

It's not fitting for **you** to join your hands in the casket!
However, however,...

But you have not died:
 your lightning suddenly flashed,
For slowly to extinguish
 you had not time.
(Who can say why, -
 from pain
 or from love-
Your heart broke?)

Is it not all the same?-
 Now?...

For no one understood
your "eccentricities" ever,
And You -like a guilty child-
shamefacedly defend yourself:
"But it is out of love for my brethren
that I exceed all moderation..."
You never knew "I cannot",
the easy ways
 or ease you did not seek.
"That's how it must be!)-
 The price -unimportant!
You begrudged not freedom or...
 life itself!
(.. Who knows,
 what you bought for it?
For what
 you offered this dreadful fate?...)
Is it not because - You alone - oft
 held held the keys \
 to firmly-fastened hearts,
And could speak to them of love
 I like no one else...
And by your words...
 Yes, by your words,
 for you uttered them **not** just with your lips,
But with the fire of love and sacrifice.
You knew how to be **Samaritan** to all,
 for after all, you were a *priest!*
Only different...
 that's why streams of healing balsam
 from your lips and heart
 ran into the depths of plundered hearts...!
High -like a hawk- you soared,
And invited us
 to rise to Love's Sun!
O how those dizzy heights tempted us!

Only... we did not always
 have nerve enough
 Our weak wings
 against the wind to test...
 Don't blame us!-
 we are so weak
 and fearful,
 and exhausted...
 Rather -obtain for us
 just a small spark
 of sacrifice and love-
 resolve and courage,
 That we might not forget
 in passion's clamor
 the way you showed to us.
 From there now teach us
 "to live not for self",
 "to suffer in innocence" without fear,
 "not to refuse Love
 whatever it requests",
 And "next to our condemned
 Beloved boldly stand"...

You will yet return-
 You cannot otherwise!
 For wayward sons
 go and come not back...
 For full are the roadsides
 Of wounded paupers,
 Of robbed and
 crippled hearts...

"Priests" pass by and "Levites"-
 All who know not love,
 who love uncertainly
 And do no longer see
 in your soiled face
 the marks of indelible
 divinity.

O, how difficult!- -
 looking into your mirror,
 The truth is so stern,
 implacable
 and clear!
We must love
 as Christ commanded!
 For no other Gospel
 is there!

Nor are there any enemies-
 In all the earth!
 There are - only wounded hearts,
 Bereft-
 without love.
 Without light- -
 We all owe it to them,
 if "we have not exceeded moderation",-
 I like you!...

At your grave I did not stand-
 I did not pour earth
 on your clear eyes...
 Forever may that look
 accompany me.
 I did not bring a flower
 budding in the frost...
 They are not needed,
 when your blood produces blossoms-

I did not come to bow my head - - -
 But now you know,
 what no one else will know - - -
 And what I had not time on earth to tell you.
 But even now I have not said it all.
 And so today I do not say adieu,
 For you will yet return-
 you cannot otherwise.
 You left-
 that you might be the nearer...
 You speak more loudly now.
 And your words
 seek their way into my heart
 I like a refreshing dew,
 and shine clearly-
 I like lightening bolts,
 So that no one can
 any longer stifle them.

Just don't grow distant!...
 Just don't grow quiet, please!
 And your clear gaze
 I don't wish to forget...
 Let it be for me
 no accusation,
 but a beacon on the way!
 That way,
 on which you stopped
 as though to rest the Morning of Eternity.

Blaze up and burn-
In deeds and words alive!
And bloom as the blossom
Of sacrifice and love!
That slumbering while we
await the wedding banquet
we not run out of hearts'
fragrant oil -

Do you
Here-
now perfectly loving-
help us!

You will yet return!
You cannot otherwise...
For how will we do here?
Without you?
... So long
the saints' road
to Lithuania,
Washed by baptismal waters
and the blood
of innocent victims! - -

Let Pain Speak

(To have been delivered at the grave of
Father Juozas Zdebskis, February 10, 1986)

Like a bolt from the blue, the news of Father Juozapas Zdebskis' death struck Lithuania... How one would have liked to believe that it was a rumor, since after all the KGB disseminated similar inventions before the trials of Fathers Sigitas Tamkevičius and Alfonsas Svarinskas. Unfortunately, details of the incident came into focus; from all quarters the sad confirmations flew and the last glimmering doubts were extinguished... On February 5, the Feast of Saint Agatha, Martyr, Father Juozas' *Zhiguli* had collided with a milk truck on the road between Varna and Eišiškės. The driver, Algis Sabaliauskas, Father Juozas Zdebskis sitting next to him and passenger Miss D. Šidlauskaitė were killed. A fourth passenger in the *Zhiguli* was injured and taken to the hospital in Šalčininkai.

We stand in the churchyard of Rudamina, at the grave which will soon embrace the earthly remains of this apostle of Jesus. The church and the little hill over which the two towers rise cannot hold all the faithful. From Klaipėda and from Ukmergė, from Šiauliai and Druskininkai, Vilnius and Kaunas, thousands of people, over a hundred priests, with Their Excellencies Bishops Juozas Preikšas and Vincentas Sladkevičius and just as many youth. The laity, men and women, young and old, mourn unabashed before the casket of the deceased.

Lord, God. what do you wish to tell our nation by this pain? Were we unworthy to have in our midst someone like Father Juozas? He bore us on his hands, and in his heart.

Nowadays, we proudly proclaim that the first Lithuanian book was the catechism; he defended our right to open the catechism, paying for it with his freedom in labor camp. He showed us a God who is near, dwelling in our midst. He gave us Jesus, present in our love for one another. When everything was frozen in the grip of overbearing brutality, terror and fear, when all of us waited like rabbits to scatter at the first sound, he would secretly gather us into small groups, he would organize meetings, open the Friends of the Eucharist rule-book, and we would hear: "With God on our side who can be against us? ...Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. ...For I am certain of this: Neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8, 31,35-39)

Oh those little rule-books primitively reproduced in carbon copies! The simple requirements of love and prayer for one another with the general intentions for the month at the end! They caused a revolution in our lives and are doing so to this day! Do we still have them? Do we keep them like a baton in the good race to be passed on to those whom Jesus wishes to draw to Himself though us? We remember that feeling of strength and unity that pleasure of risk which used to permeate our meetings and make them similar to the agapes of the first Christians. We remember those humble homes and apartments in which they transpired, at times ending with a visit from the KGB and a journey to the interrogation offices.

You, Father Juozas, taught us to trust and to depend, not on our own, but on the courage from God and to overcome Satan's deceit and his attempts to recruit us. Having deeply meditated on the Lord's words, "...insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to Me," (Matt 25,40) with priestly concern leaned over our much-abused homeland, Lithuania.

You taught us beautiful Lithuanian songs. You were for us the textbook of the unadulterated history of Lithuania. It was from your lips that many of us learned the meaning of the yellow, green and red flag, February 16 and Vytis... (The knight errant - national symbol of independent Lithuania -- Trans. Note)

Nor was it cheap politicking. Never did we see you succumbing to that hatred for our violent occupants, so difficult to avoid. By word and deed you constantly urged us to see them as our unhappy brothers, whom our practice of heroic virtue, our constant loyalty and our suffering offered to the Redeemer must save. You did not attack the external manifestations of the devil, nor did you teach us to shout, "Down with the Soviet government!" "Russians, out of Lithuania!" You went for the very essence and urged, "Down with slavery to sin!" "Freedom for Christ in Lithuania!"

Just as the Lord gives us His Body and Blood on the altar, turning it into food for us, so you, following the example of your Master, gave us

your time, your rest and your health. You used to reach the poor exiles thousands of kilometers away and recruits being pushed around in a foreign army, with Confession, Mass, Communion, and refreshment from the homeland. No obstacles, no dangers, could prevent you. In your face, always glowing with the bright calm of eternity, we saw the face of Christ. Pressing to your heart in confession, in our difficulties, we felt the heart of Christ beating.

And so today, regardless of all those who have abandoned the priesthood, regardless of those who have not abandoned it but travelled abroad to defend the Afghan "peace", regardless of all this, we utter with sacred respect the word "priest", because Father Juozas, we knew you.

Today your body and soul are no longer vulnerable to the trials by the Pilates and the Caiphases, and the accusations of hypocrites; they are no longer under the jurisdiction of the "powerful of this world".

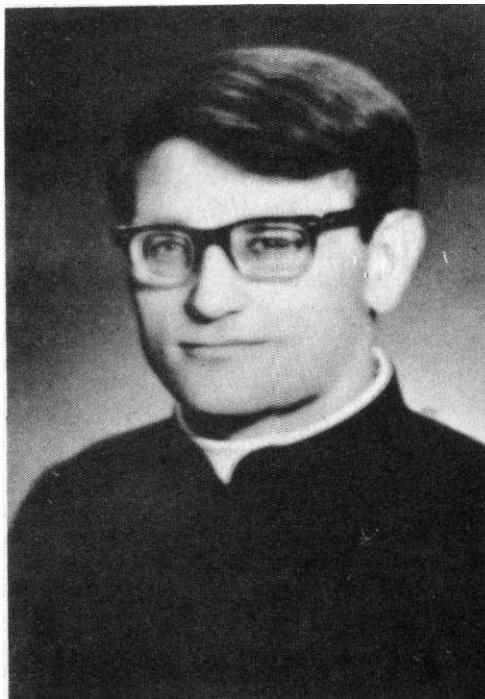
Today we can speak boldly and thank you for the work which you allowed Jesus to accomplish in you and in us: for the youth organization, for your self-sacrificing activity in the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, for your innovative work in the missions, for your popularization of abstinence and temperance, supported by fervent prayer and personal example.

While mourning on this day of separation, we take comfort in the idea you instilled that a relationship with good friends does not break off even when the latter go to the Lord. That idea which sums up your whole life is wonderfully well expressed in the quotation from Scripture, inscribed on your tombstone, "Love does not come to an end!" (1Corinth. 13,8)

We believe and we know that you, Father Juozas, having been nearest our troubles and hurts in this earthly life, together with Fathers Bronius Laurinavičius, Karolis Garuckas, Virgilijus Jaugelis, together with Danutė Burbaitė, that champion of the purity of the land of the Dzūkai (One of the ancient peoples making up the Lithuanian nation Trans. Note), will continue to love us with the love of God. And we, supported by it, resolve that the ideal of the little insignia of the Pensive Christ will not fade from our hearts. We will not forget our resolutions at the end of the retreats you conducted. In our families, in our children, the seed sown for the future of our homeland by your sweeping motions will grow. And if the seminary of Kaunas did not allow a single seminarian to come to your funeral, that does not mean there were no seminarians at your casket.

We pray, and our consciences are sure, that on the Last Day, Jesus the Judge will say to those standing at His right Hand, "Come, you who my Father has blessed... For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." (Matt 25,34-36) -- then we will stand before you. we whom you fed, gave drink to, sheltered, clothed and visited, and we will take you where you have been leading us by your whole life, and even by your tragic death. May God receive, thank and reward you!

Friends of the Eucharist



Father Jonas Kauneckas

WHEN AND HOW WILL THE BLACKMAIL END?

In the spring of 1985, the pastor of Skaudvilė, Father Jonas Kauneckas, wrote a complaint to Moscow regarding, in his words, the way in which KGB agents and the staffs of prosecutors' offices transgress Soviet law and their own policy decisions. Even his closest friends were unable to obtain the text of Father Kauneckas' ocomplaint, or to find out any details about that complaint. He said that he did not wish to create the possibility of retaliation for criticism, since members of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights who were sentenced had been accused of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda because documents of the committee were also known abroad.

After the complaint, the beginning of a KGB campaign of vengeance against Father Kauneckas was clearly not iced; perhaps plans were even laid to do away with him. In the spring and summer of 1985, KGB agents in Taurage "fabricated" in all sorts of ways the priest's "offenses". In this

action, not the last place was taken by Director Shevelev, and especially by KGB agent Vytautas Valantinavičius. Almost all the members of the Skaudvilė parish council were interrogated.

The KGB agents tried to convince the faithful that Father Kauneckas is a criminal, more dangerous than Father Alfonsas Svarinskas or Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, but very shrewd.

"We will take care of him even more shrewdly than we did those other priests: The witnesses in their cases were unbelievers, but against Father Kauneckas, only believers shall testify!"

The KGB tried to convince members of the parish committee that the priest disseminates the *Chronicle*. The chekists demanded, using the most terrible threats, that parishioners testify that they receive the *Chronicle* from Father Kauneckas.

They demanded that they testify thus, threatening them even with a poor future their children: they would never get into schools, they would be drafted into the army and sent to Afghanistan, etc. Similarly threatened were the members of the Adakavas church committee. Unable to withstand the blackmail, Chairman Lembutis and Secretary Lembutienė of the church committee of Adakavas resigned.

The chekists are trying to create an unbearable atmosphere for working and living for Father Kauneckas. On August 14, 1985, a militiaman came to the rectory and wrote up a complaint that living there unregistered and cooking for the priest was Miss Bronė Aputytė (she cannot register here since she has a government apartment in Gargždai). A few days later, a militiaman delivered a warning: if she did not register, she would be penalized. On August 29, Chairwoman Mrs. Bernikienė and Secretary Mrs. Karosienė of the Skaudvilė City Executive Committee prepared documentation for fining Miss Aputytė.

On August 30, she had to present herself to the Tauragė Militia, and give up her apartment in Gargždai.

But the militiamen who came that day did not find her at the rectory; she had already left for Gargždai. Even though Father Kauneckas was going to the town restaurant to eat, militiamen still sought Miss Aputytė several more times at the rectory.

During the parish retreat, December 14-15, some local women were preparing a meal in the rectory. The priest's sister-in-law and his ailing sister had come to visit. When the militia came, they frightened the priest's sister so badly that she had to see a doctor.

The KGB began pressuring those who drive the priest to the church in Adakavas which he serves, or elsewhere. Alfonsas Kamenskas, Aldofas Kumpikevičius, Juozas Dabulskis, Aleksas Ivanauskas, Rimantas Andruška, Remigijus Laugalis and Vytautas Neteckas, who had driven the priest at one time or another, were interrogated. The KGB summoned communal farm warehouseman Vytautas Neteckas, who worked as sacristan on Sundays at the church in Adakavas, to the Department of Motor Vehicles and other offices and, showing up at his workplace, they demanded that he come to the district center every Monday to describe the priest's sermon.

Neteckas developed a chronic disorder of the nervous system, resigned from his duties as warehouseman, and because of illness, he lost his

chauffeur's license. In spite of that, he would sometimes drive the priest to Adakavas.

On January 18, 1986, Chairwoman Bernikiene of the Skaudvile City Executive Committee, telephoned militiaman Grubliauskas to stand by on Sunday to detain Father Kauneckas. KGB agent Vytautas Valantinavičius arrived in his automobile, and in the city square waited for Neteckas to drive by. Stopping him, he fined him 30 rubles and warned him that if he drove the priest back, the automobile would be confiscated. The chekist jeered: "Even though you chauffeur the pastor, even though you go to church, God does not help you. You lost your license, you paid a fine and you lost your automobile. Work for us doing what we tell you and you won't have to pay the fine and tomorrow you will get your license back..."

By all sorts of warnings, the KGB agent wanted to force organist Remigijus Laugalis to work for them. Now they summon him to the passport desk, now to the Department of Motor Vehicles or they come after him at home. During the summer of 1985, he took driving lessons. "You shall not get your license," warned the KGB agents. And as a matter of fact, Laugalis was not allowed to take the examinations. A 30 ruble fine was levied for driving without a license. After Mass at Adakavas, KGB agent Valantinavičius constantly shows up and watches to see how the organist rides home.

On January 15, 1986, they waited for him outside the rectory in Adakavas. They looked for him at his in-laws, for when summoned, he did not go to the passport desk in Tauragė.

On January 11, 1986, KGB Chief Shevelev told his neighbors that soon Father Kauneckas would have to be arrested for showing slides in church. Talk about the arrest was spread quite widely, most likely for the purpose of creating an atmosphere of fear.

On March 12, 1986, all church committee members in the Rayon of Tauragė were summoned for a lecture. Here they were addressed by Ka2ukauskas, spokesman for the Commissioner for Religious Affairs. As usual, he explained the *Regulations for Religious Associations*. From the way in which Rayon Executive Committee Vice Chairwoman Mrs. Ulbiene spoke, it is clear that in the future, they plan to go after Father Kauneckas. Vice Chairwoman Ulbienė called the church in Skaudvilė "a hotbed of criminal activity".

Mrs. Ulbienė clearly felt that someone is trying to force the issue. For example, Father Kauneckas invites other priests to the church for devotions and retreats without informing the rayon Executive Committee or receiving its permission, thus transgressing the aforementioned *Regulations*, since a priest may function only in his own parish.

Father Kauneckas is demanding that the faithful sign temperance pledges (as a matter of fact, Father Kauneckas is not demanding such pledges, but what is wrong if he sometimes urges from the pulpit that those who are determined to live in sobriety register in the parish temperance book), that he showed slides in church, held a Christmas celebration in church, went to the cemetery to pray on All Souls' Day and there performed ceremonies. It is constantly emphasized that the pastor of Skaudvilė thus breaks the law (even though almost everywhere in Lithuania

priests do not ask permission to invite priests, they show slides, etc.)

PRIESTS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE LITHUANIAN CHURCH

To: The Bishops and Apostolic Administrators of Lithuania
From: Priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys

A Petition

We, the undersigned, priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys, concerned that the 600-year Jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania be suitably commemorated, appeal to the bishops and administrators of dioceses of Lithuania requesting them:

1. To invite our Holy Father John Paul II to visit Lithuania for the jubilee celebration in 1987.

2. To request our Holy Father John Paul II, on the occasion of the 600-year Jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania, to proclaim the Honorable Servant of God Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, Blessed. To see that during the year of preparation, the believing public becomes more widely acquainted with the life, virtues and work of Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis.

To popularize as well the veneration of Mykolas Giedraitis, who holds the title of Blessed. To acquaint the faithful also with the other great spiritual personalities of our nation: Father A. Rudamina, Father J. Pabrėža, Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys, Archbishop Teofilius Matulionis, Archbishop Vincentas Borisevičius, Father A. Lipniūnas, Professor Stasys Šalkauskas, Prof. Pranas Dovydaitis, Barbora Žagarietė and M. Pečkauskaitė...

3. That the civil government not interfere in the affairs of the Kaunas Seminary, especially in choosing the administration, the faculty and even the seminarians. In the present abnormal circumstances, there is ample evidence that seminarians are finishing the seminary and being ordained priests who are not only undisposed to concern themselves with the spiritual life of the faithful, but are themselves unwilling to live such a life. This is not only painful, but damaging to the Church. It is regrettable that even psychiatric patients are being ordained. The Code of Canon Law and the Decrees of Vatican II set forth a very careful selection of candidates:

"In all selection and testing of seminarians, necessary standards must be always firmly maintained, even when there exists a regrettable shortage of priests. For God will not allow His Church to lack ministers if worthy candidates are admitted, while unsuited ones are speedily and fraternally directed toward the assuming of other tasks..." (Decree on Priestly Formation, No. 6, p.444)

The plight of the Church is very difficult when the civil government obstructs and interferes in the internal affairs of the Church: Clergy appointments to parishes, selections of bishops and administrators of dioceses and even the formation of Priests' Councils and Boards of



From left: Bishop Antanas Vaičius, Bishop Liudvikas Povilonis, Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius and Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius at the 1982 reinstatement of Bishop Sladkevičius as Apostolic Administrator of Kaišiadorys after twenty-three years of exile.

Consul tors.

4. To continue the work of temperance so well begun: At least once a year to arrange temperance days in all dioceses (at a diocesan level) and in all parishes. To strive for not only sobriety but also abstinence among clergy and lai ty.

5. Not to allow clergy to participate in activities forbidden by our Holy Father, John Paul 11.

6. The bishops and administrators of dioceses of Lithuania to approach the government of the Soviet Union:

a. That the exiled Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, His Excellency Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, be returned to his duties;

b. That there be a review of the cases of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Jonas Kastytis Matulionis and lay believers sentenced for the defense of the rights of the Church and believers, and that they be released;

c. That priests not be obstructed from catechizing children as Canon Law requires;

d. That the faithful, especially children and youth, not be frightened and terrorized for the public practice of religion which is guaranteed in Art. 5 of the USSR Constitution, and/that they not be forced

to join atheistic organizations; that in the classroom, in educating children and youth, the rights of the believing parents to rear their own children according to their religious beliefs not be infringed upon;

e. That they allow believers the same right to use the media in disseminating their beliefs as do the atheists;

f. That Sundays not be made workdays, and that Catholics not be prevented from fulfilling their religious duties, that there be no workday on Holy Days of Obligation for Catholics, and that the faithful be freely able to celebrate them;

g. That the Cathedral of Vilnius, the Church of Saint Casimir and the Church of Klaipėda be returned to the faithful... and that churches be allowed to be erected in new cities: N. Akmenė, Elektrėnai, Sniečkus... as well as in the *microrayons* of Vilnius, Kaunas and other cities.

We hope that the 600-year Jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania will be celebrated more solemnly than the central jubilee of 500 years from the death of Saint Casimir in 1984. 1985.

Signed by the following priests:

1. Petras Adomonis 2. Canon Bronius Antanaitis 3. Juozas Antanavičius 4. Vincentas Arlauskas 5. Boleslovas Babrauskas 6. Jonas Bagdonas 7. Bronius Balaiša 8. Juozas Bagdonas 9. Antanas Balaišis 10. Vytautas Balašauskas 11. Jonas Balčiūnas 12. Juozas Balčiūnas 13. Jurgis Balickaitis 14. Kostas Balsys 15. Petras Baltuška 16. Algis Baniulis 17. Petras Baniulis 18. Kazimieras Baronas 19. Henrikas Bernotavičius 20. Vladas Braukyla 21. Adolfas Breivė 22. Petras Budriūnas 23. Jonas Buliauskas 24. Jonas Butkys 25. Paulius Ciuckis

26. Feliksas Čiškauskas 27. Algirdas Dauknyš 28. Juozas Dubnikas 29. Steponas Galvydis 30. Juozapas Garška 31. Juozas Giedraitis 32. Kazimieras Girnius 33. Mykolas Gylis 34. Antanas Gobis 35. Alfonsas Gražys 36. Antanas Gružauskas 37. Klemensas Gutauskas 38. Gaudentas Ikamas 39. Vincentas Inkratas 40. Tadas Ivanovskis 41. Alfonsas Jančys 42. Paulius Jankevičius 43. Juozas Janulis 44. Vytautas Jasiūnas 45. Jonas Jatulis 46. Paulius Juozėnas 47. Jonas Jurgaitis 48. Antanas Juška 49. Alfonsas Kadžius 50. Antanas Kairys

51. Vytautas Kapočius 52. Stasys Kazėnas 53. Lionginas Keršulis 54. Petras Kiela 55. Antanas Kietis 56. Anicetas Kisielius 57. Paulius Klezys 58. Petras Krasauskas 59. Vladas Kremenskas 60. Stanislovas Krumpļauskas 61. Petras Kuzmickas 62. Jonas Labakojis 63. Juozas Lukšas 64. Leonas Lukšas 65. Petras Markevičius 66. Vytautas Marozas 67. Aleksandras Masys 69. Juozapas Mickevičius 70. Antanas Mikulėnas 71. Algirdas Miškinis 72. Paulius Miškinis 73. Antanas Mitrikas 74. Kazimieras Mozūras 75. Jonas Nagulevičius

76. Algirdas Narušis 77. Lionginas Neniškis 78. Petras Nykštis 79. Albinas Paltanavičius 80. Antanas Petrauskas 81. Albinas Pipiras 82. Jonas Pranevičius 83. Augustinas Pranskietis 84. Robertas Pukėnis 85. Isidorius Puriuškis 86. Antanas Rameikis 87. Jonas Rimša 88. Edmundas Rinkevičius

89. Pranciškus Sabaliauskas 90. Raimondas Saprigonas 91. Aurelijus Simonaitis 92. Bronius Simsonas 93. Leonardas Skardinskas 94. Jonas Skirelis 95. Mykolas Stonys 96. Vincentas Stankevičius 97. Bronius Strazdas 98. Alfonsas Strielčiūnas 99. Aloyzas Sungaila 100. Paulius Svirkis

101. Ignas Šiaučiūnas 102. Bronius Šlapelis 103. Paulius Sliauteris 104. Gediminas Šukys 105. Juozapas Sumskis 106. Albertas Talačka 107. Leonardas Tamošauskas 108. Pranas Tamulionis 109. Stasys Tamulionis 110. Petras Tarulis 111. Petras Tijušas 112. Vytautas TvariJonas 113. Jonas Uogintas 114. Benediktas Urbonas 115. Sigitas Uždavinyš 116. Jonas Vaičiūnas 117. Antanas Valančiūnas 118. Antanas Valantinas 119. Juozapas Varnas 120. Paulius Varžinskas 121. Antanas Vaškevičius 122. Virginijus Veilentas 123. Vytautas Zakrys 124. Stasys Zabavičius 125. Antanas Zulonas 126. Bronius Žilinskas 127. Serafinas Žvinys

At the time the signatures were collected, there were 130 priests in the Diocese of Panevėžys.

To: Mikhail Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of the USSR
From: The Priests of the Diocese of Panevėžys,
of the Catholic Church in Lithuania

A Petition

In 1987, the Catholics of Lithuania will celebrate the 600th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity into Lithuania. For 600 years, Christian teaching has sunk deep roots in our nation. The Constitution of the USSR guarantees freedom of conscience and religious liberty, but atheistic activists nullify this Constitutional guarantee.

1. The children of believing parents are persecuted in school, morally terrorized for public church attendance; against the wishes of their parents they are compelled to enroll in atheistic organizations. Those who do not sign up are threatened that they will be unable to enroll in institutions of higher and advanced education. Those who sign up are forbidden to fulfill their religious duties and some seniors who actively participate in religious services are not even allowed to take final examinations. Those who wish to fulfill their religious obligations must do so secretly, and so from childhood they are forced to play the hypocrite. This is a painful wound in our society.

2. Various government functionaries or teachers are unable publicly to fulfill their religious duties as required by their convictions and conscience, so they are forced to go off to distant places to fulfill their religious obligations where no one knows them; or to marry or have children baptized by night, so that no one might see it.

Teachers who believe must speak against their convictions in an atheistic manner while Art. 50 of the USSR Constitution guarantees freedom

of conscience. When a man holding an influential position leaves his wife and children and forms a new family, that is considered a personal affair, for which he is not penalized; but if a government employee publicly fulfills his religious obligations, he is demoted.

3. The USSR Constitution guarantees equality of all citizens, but how is it in real life? The atheists have everything: press, radio and television, while believers are not allowed near these mass media.

After World War II, just a few families of believers were able to obtain prayerbooks and catechisms. The atheists are served by all schools, beginning with kindergarten and ending with university, while it is forbidden to teach the children of believing parents catechism, even in church. For such teaching, priests are tried and punished. Believers are not allowed to arrange trips, hire a car; they are not allowed to go to religious devotions even by taxi; for example, Šiluva, Žemaičių Kalvariija and Varduva.

Believers in the hospital are not always allowed to summon a priest before their death.

It is not permitted to pray at the casket of a believer in funeral establishments, according to Catholic custom.

4. According to Art. 50 of the USSR Constitution, the Church is separated from the state, but in real life, it is otherwise: When the bishops and administrators of dioceses appoint priests to or transfer them from a parish, the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, as the representative of the atheist government, interfering with the well-being of the Church, makes the final decision regarding the appointment of a priest to a parish, or his removal. It is the same with the selection of candidates to become bishop or diocesan administrator, the appointment of instructors to the seminary, the acceptance of candidates for the seminary (and he allows an all-too-small number of them to be accepted) so that there is a great shortage of priests.

The Commissioner for Religious Affairs interferes in the selection of Priests' Councils and Boards of Consultors. This is interference in the internal affairs of the Church. Officials of the civil government interfere even in the order of worship, demanding to know why this priest held services rather than another, why prayers were said for the priests suffering in prison... He interferes even in family life and the organizing of church committees...

5. Christianity was first brought to Lithuania in Vilnius, hence the cathedral of Vilnius is the cradle of Christianity in Lithuania, and this shrine has been taken away from the faithful. Saint Casimir is the Patron of Lithuania, but the church named after him has been converted into a museum of atheism, just as the church built by offerings from the faithful in Klaipeda was transformed into a philharmonic hall. This is ridiculing the believers.

6. The USSR has obligated itself to observe the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which states in Article 18: "Everyone has the right to 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.

The USSR has also obligated itself to carry out the *Final Accords of the Helsinki Conference*, Section 7 of which states: "Participating states respect human rights and basic freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief..." and Section 10 states, "Participating states will conscientiously carry out their obligations according to international law: both those obligations according to international law, as well as obligations which flow from universally recognized principles and norms of law, as well as those which proceed from international agreements in accord with law, and other agreements to which they are a party."

Hence, the wrongs committed against believers which are listed above are an offense against international agreements.

7. When priests and faithful publicize the injustices and calumnies perpetrated against them, they are accused of libeling the Soviet Union, and are put on trial, like Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Jonas Kastytis Matulionis. Some Catholic laymen are sentenced just for the defense of rights of believers. If the government means to adhere to its Constitution and obligations, they must be freed.

We request you, as the leader of the state, to see that the aforesaid anti-Constitutional injustices and discrimination against believers be abolished and the situation corrected. 1985.

The following priests signed:

1. Petras Adomonis 2. Canon Bronius Antanaitis 3. Vincentas Arlauskas 4. Boleslovas Babrauskas 5. Jonas Bagdonas 6. Juozas Antanavičius 7. Juozas Bagdonas 8. Bronius Balaiša 9. Antanas Balaišis 10. Vytautas Balašauskas 11. Jonas Balčiūnas 12. Juozas Balčiūnas 13. Jurgis Balickaitis 14. Kostas Balsys 15. Petras Baltuška 16. Algis Baniulis 17. Petras Baniulis 18. Kazimieras Baronas 19. Henrikas Bernotavičius 20. Vladas Braukyla 21. Adolfas Breivė 22. Petras Budriūnas 23. Jonas Buliauskas 24. Jonas Butkys 25. Paulius Čiučkis

26. Algirdas Dauknys 27. Feliksas Čiškauskas 28. Juozas Dubnikas 29. Steponas Galvydis 30. Juozapas Garška 31. Juozas Giedraitis 32. Kazimieras Girnius 33. Mykolas Gylis 34. Antanas Gobis 35. Alfonsas Gražys 36. Antanas Gružauskas 37. Klemensas Gutauskas 38. Gaudentas Ikamas 39. Vincentas Inkratas 40. Tadas Ivanovskis 41. Alfonsas Jančys 42. Paulius Jankevičius 43. Juozas Janulis 44. Vytautas Jasiūnas 45. Jonas Jatulis 46. Paulius Juozėnas 47. Jonas Jurgaitis 48. Antanas Juška 49. Alfonsas Kadžius 50. Antanas Kairys

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Naguievičius

76. Algirdas Narušis 77. Lioginas Neniškis 78. Petras Nykštas 79. Albinas Paltanavičius 80. Antanas Petrauskas 81. Albinas Pipiras 82. Jonas Pranevičius 83. Augustinas Pranskietis 84. Robertas Pukenis 85. Isidorius Puriuškis 86. Antanas Ramelkis 87. Jonas Rimša 88. Edmundas Rinkevičius 89. Pranciškus Sabaliauskas 90. Raimondas Saprigonas 91. Aurelijus Simonaitis 92. Bronius Simsonas 93. Leonardas Skardinskas 94. Jonas Skirelis 95. Mykolas Stonys 96. Vincentas Stankevičius 97. Bronius Strazdas 98. Alfonsas Strielčiūnas 99. Aloyzas Sungaila 100. Paulius Svirskis

101. Ignas Šiaučiūnas 102. Bronius Šlapelis 103. Paulius Šliauteris 104. Gediminas Šukys 105. Juozapas šumskis 106. Albertas Talačka 107. Leonardas Tamošauskas 108. Pranas Tamulionis 109. Stasys Tamulionis 110. Petras Tarulis 111. Petras Tijušas 112. Vytautas Tvarijonas 113. Jonas Uogintas 114. Benediktas Urbonas 115. Sigitas Uždavinyš 116. Jonas Vaičiūnas 117. Antanas Valančiūnas 118. Antanas Valantinas 119. Juozapas Varnas 120. Paullus Varžinskas 121. Antanas Vaškevičius 122. Virginijus Veilentas 123. Vytautas Zakrys 124. Stasys Zabavičius 125. Antanas Zulonas 126. Bronius Žilinskas 127. Serafinas Žvinys

TRIALS, RAIDS AND INTERROGATIONS

Novosibirsk Region

Father Josef Svidnicki, a priest of Novosibirsk, sentenced last year, is in prison at the following address:

Novosibirsk
Kuibyshev
UF 91-12 ostr.
6 brigada 61
Ind. 632350

Friends who visited him February 2, report that although Father Josef is, as always, in good spirits, his health has significantly worsened; in their words, he looks as though he had been taken down from the cross. The food is very poor, packages are looted by criminals, and recently, the priest has had a heart attack. Formerly he worked in the kitchen, but now he has been transferred to other work; he is hauling lumber. He is allowed to see visitors only through a glass partition, and to speak to them only in Russian.

Panevėžys

On October 24, 1985, five militiamen came to see ethnographer Jonas Ruzas, and presenting a search warrant, proceeded to carry out the search for about three hours. After that, ten KGB agents came and once more

pulled the whole room apart. The chekists concealed their names; it later became apparent that one of them was named Skudas. The KGB agents confiscated a small printing press, became interested in the officially published poems of Tvardovskl, and said that they had come to confiscate and destroy the memoirs of Vaidulis and threatened Ruzas that if he did not assemble all six copies of the memoirs, he would get five years in prison. Ruzas located one or two copies of the memoirs and turned them into the KGB. After the raid, they took Ruzas and his wife away for questioning. The next day, they were interrogated again.

V i d u k l é (Raseiniai Rayon)

On November 30, 1985, Mrs. M. Saukienė, a resident of Viduklė, was summoned to KGB Headquarters in Raseiniai. An investigator accused Mrs. Saukiene of some sort of terrible crime committed in May, 1984, as she lay in the hospital of Raseiniai. It seems that this great "crime" was considered to be the fact that the patient had with her a rosary, a notebook with some prayers and in it, a photograph of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas. The chekists railed at the subject of the interrogation, demanding to know how she could carry about with her and even show to others the photograph of such a great criminal. "You're not even allowed to pray for him!" shouted the KGB agent who had not revealed his name.

The woman explained that the priest was not a criminal, but the victim of atheists' lies and calumny. "We believers pray not only for priest-prisoners, but for all those astray, among them, you KGB agents," said Mrs. Saukiene.

The woman reminded the chekists that the government should amnesty Father Svarinskas for she herself had taken on the war against drunkenness which the priest had begun. Furious, the KGB agent accused Father Svarinskas of murder. The investigator considered it a crime that Mrs. Saukiene, while in the hospital, had publicly told of Father Svarinskas' trial in ViInius.

The chekist was interested in knowing how the subject under interrogation rated the pope's activities, and he said that the election of Paul II as pope had been a serious mistake and he guaranteed that in Lithuania it would never be the way it was in Poland.

The interrogation lasted two hours.

V i d u k l é

On October 3, 1985, Miss Adelė Jucevičiūtė, a resident of Viduklė, was summoned to the rayon. The KGB chief asked how she had dared to pray aloud in church for the incarcerated pastor of the parish, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, and for other arrested priests and prisoners. The chekist affirmed that it was not permitted in church to pray aloud for state criminals such as the arrested priests.

The girl explained that neither she nor the other parishioners know of any crimes on the part of Father Alfonsas Svarinskas or the other priest-prisoners. On the contrary, they saw only their self-sacrificing

work, patience and struggle against drunkenness. Thanks to Father Svarinskas, most people in the parish do not use intoxicating drinks on the occasions of funerals or memorial services. And who can measure how much they have helped the faithful?

The KGB agent persisted, saying that the Constitution forbids audible prayer in church, and he demanded that she sign a pledge saying that she would not pray anymore. Miss Jucevičiūtė protested, saying that since childhood she had been praying at home and in church, that she would go on doing so, and that she would not sign any pledge.

The investigator was interested in knowing whether the young woman listens to Vatican Radio broadcasts. She said that she did and asked whether it was illegal. The KGB agent said that listening was permitted, only it was forbidden for two people to discuss the broadcasts they had heard or draw conclusions from them.

On March 25, Adelė Jucevičiūtė was again summoned to KGB headquarters. Once again, there were the same questions and threats, but the girl did not make any pledges, either verbally or in writing.

OUR PRISONERS

Gintautas Iešmantas, now in exile, writes:

"For five years now, your words and good wishes have kept me company on the difficult road of suffering. They have given me strength and the pleasure of knowing that my sacrifice has not disappeared in the darkness of anonymity, that there are people who are concerned with the fate of someone they don't know. Presently, I am in exile --since the morning of April 5-- and have the possibility of thanking you for that priceless moral support provided by your brief greetings, for the warmth of your hearts and souls which reach me in the snow-fields of the Urals, regardless of obstacles and possible unpleasantness. Of course, only part of your letters were turned over to me, and for the last year, I did not receive any of them, but I feel that they exist, helping me to live and not to lose faith and hope for even an instant. To me, they sounded like the intoxicating voice of home, so precious and dear in this unfortunate place so far away.

"For the last six months, I was in camp number 36... Father Alfonsas, as the prisoners call him, is always alert, in good spirits, full of faith and hope. I am glad that fate provided the opportunity to get acquainted with him; he is a man of wonderful spiritual strength, a far-ranging thinker, attractively tolerant, and the impression he left will never fade from my memory. When you know that there are such people as he, it becomes easier to live, and you feel that you will bear up to the end with your spirits unbroken and ready for anything, bearing the cross of stern duty.

"My exile, like that of everyone else, is part of the way of this stern duty. While in camp, you think to yourself, 'You're going to get out, and somehow or another, things will be better.' But when I saw where they had brought me, I was downright shocked. The only job is cutting



Gintautas Iešmantas

timber, hauling it, and floating it. There is of course a lumber mill, albeit a small one, so not a single job is beneath me. At first, I got one of these jobs, but when the doctor found out who I was, he asked me directly. 'Do you know or understand what kind of work it is?'

"Obviously, I did not have the slightest idea. In view of the fact that the palm of my right hand is bothering me, and needs an operation, he made a note recommending that I be given work which would not involve heavy lifting. This is how I ended up with the duties of a guard (in that same sawmill). I don't know whether to laugh or to cry, but as it turned out, it was the very best solution. There is plenty of leisure time, I am my own boss, except for one or another Saturday.

"At 4:00 PM today, I will be going back for the second time to this job. I live in a dormitory, sharing a room with a little Byelorussian from Transcarpathia. He praises the Soviet government, and criticizes capitalism just a bit too much. But that is his affair. I don't allow

myself to be drawn into discussions, and I am not friends with anyone. In my situation, all the more because in the Rayon of Vuktil, I am the only bird of this kind, it appears that the same position is most convenient. The place where I live itself is not small. They say that there are about 3,000 people living there. However, it is not very conveniently laid out. Nearby flows the Pechora, along which boats sail and rafts float by during the summer. There are, I believe, three food shops, a hospital and a middle school. The houses are of wood, one story high, except for the dormitories and administrative buildings.

"I have begun to settle in. Now everything looks different. A bus runs between Vuktil and Podcher'ye (about 20 km.), from Vuktil to Ukhta (118 km.) a plane flies, and from Ukhta to Moscow, there is another plane or train (Vorkuta - Moscow). Later it seems, I will have to find myself a private room. If only the winters were not so cold! There is no way I can become accustomed to the cold, and here, it drops to 50 degrees below zero. I trust that everything will be alright, especially since, as I said, here too, 'the good angel still watches over me'...

"Please accept my sincere greetings! "P.S. Releasing me from camp, they took away all letters." Podcher'ye, April 14, 1986.

Gintautas Iešmantas' address:
169715 Komi ASSR
Vuktylskij r-on
pos. Podcher'ye, ul. Sovetskaja, obšč.N:1
Gintautas Iešmantas

Father Sigitas Tamkevičius writes:

"...Thanks to everyone for everything. So it is that we wish to remember the words of Saint John Chrysostom, 'You give bread, and receive Eternal Life. You give a garment and receive the garment of Immortality. You give temporary goods, and receive eternal goods. You receive more than you give.'

"The most precious gift for me was the Sacred Scriptures. In my free hours, I read and ponder in my heart the Lord's words. When I lived in freedom, there were many chores and concerns, and many things remained unexamined, too little plumbed. God brought me to the Urals, and provided the setting for a long retreat, that I might better hear the Lord's word, and taste the bread of the Lord in a more real fashion. The three apostles, having felt the proximity of God, cried out, 'It is good for us to be here!' Wherever we are, in freedom or in prison, at the altar or at a kitchen sink, the presence of God cheers and comforts us. Intercede for me with your prayers, so that this presence of God might be a reality in my life.

"... there is nothing new in my daily life, my alarm clock arouses me for work every other day. This is my Nazareth... I am trying to get into the solemn spirit of Lent. How quickly time flies! Sometimes I am seized with fear: 'Lord, just don't let those quickly passing days be empty, if

only they would serve in some small measure for the spread of God's kingdom...'

"I send greetings to all who have visited me and I am prayerfully grateful to them." February 14, 1986

From a letter by Jadvyga Bieliauskienė:

"...I became very ill with three relapses. Sacrifice is a sign of affirmation. My soul was flooded with a clear light never before seen, which accompanied me and continues to accompany me in hardships never before experienced, lighting the way in new colors to a constantly deepening and growing enunciation of self, or perhaps to death as a sacrifice freely accepted. If it should happen, rejoice and praise the Lord, that the humble sacrifice of the most unworthy and wayward one became accepted for the purpose of saving our infants and children from deadly drunkenness and the harsh fate it brings: broken families, unnatural children lacking care, no morals and lack of faith...

"The gift of faith helps the most ordinary believer to look upon suffering as upon a necessary, cleansing power.

"I understood that suffering is only fruitful when we accept it submissively only then does it open the eyes of the soul. The desire to raise our dear ones from their fall lends meaning to our suffering which in the name of saving them we accept with joy, ourselves growing in love, freed by it from the fear of suffering. 'Whoever is afraid still does not love enough,' says the Apostle of Love. Oh how many unhappy people leave this life having never awakened to love, having never shed their blindness! How sad! I pray constantly that they would wake up at least at the hour of death, that they might be awakened by a merciful God...

"Greetings to everyone, everyone!

"With you always at the feet of the Eucharistic Jesus, my dearest ones!"

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Thank You!

We sincerely thank the Baltic American Freedom League for the award conferred on us! It is a mark of appreciation for the efforts, struggles and sufferings of our whole nation, and at the same time, an incentive to harder work and greater sacrifice.

We thank all our brothers and sisters abroad who support our efforts by prayer, by the word and other possible means.

May the good God reward you!

K r e t i n g a

On February 19, 1986, Petras Paulaitis, a former long-term prisoner, a fierce fighter and noble human being, died in Kretinga after a long illness. The deceased was interred in the cemetery of Kretinga.

V i l n i u s

On December 20, 1985, the bishops and administrators of dioceses of Lithuania were summoned to the office of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs. Commissioner Petras Anilionis and Vice Chairman Česnavičius of the Council of Ministers spoke to them. In the beginning of his lecture, Anilionis berated the bishops and the administrators because the contents of his last talk got abroad... The Commissioner reminded everyone that it is necessary to see that the 600-year Jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania would go by as well as, in his opinion, the jubilee of Saint Casimir.

He accused the jubilee committee, under the chairmanship of Bishop Preikšas, which applied to the government of Lithuania with a request that on the occasion of the jubilee, the Cathedral of Vilnius, the Church of Saint Casimir and Queen of Peace Church in Klaipėda be returned. These requests will not be satisfied. For the Jubilee, Vilnius will surely have a bishop or even a cardinal! Whatever church he chooses as his residence will be the cathedral, the Commissioner stated. As for the return of the Church of Saint Casimir, Anilionis advised them to name any other church in Vilnius for Saint Casimir. "The Church of Klaipėda will never be returned, so put an addition on to the existing church," said the Commissioner.

Anilionis advised the bishops not to write to government agencies... As a bad example, he cited the pastor of the parish of Žagarė, Father Gustavas Gudanaivičius. "After he had written his libelous letter to Mikhail Gorbachev, I went to Žagarė and explained matters for two hours, x Gudanaivičius, Father Gustavas However, returning home, I received a new letter from Father Gudanaivičius in the same tone. Such extremists must eventually be straightened out," the Commissioner railed.

Vice Chairman Česnavičius of the Council of Ministers explained to the bishops and to the administrators of dioceses the economic attainments of the country, not overlooking Church matters. He stated that the bishops were responsible for the arrests of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius. If the bishops themselves had checked these priests in time, they would not be sitting in prison now, Vice Chairman Česnavičius said. The speaker urged the bishops and administrators "to employ firmer discipline with the extremists still at large."

"It is libelous," affirmed Česnavičius, "to say that the government interferes in seminary matters. After all, you yourselves set up the seminary rule and curriculum. We do not interfere in marking examinations, but we have not only the right but the duty to see that there be no persons among the seminarians or instructors inclined to be anti-Soviet. It is libel to say that the government interferes in the appointments of bishops and priests. You appoint them, we just confirm and register them; obviously we have the right not to register appointments which do not serve the socialist system," Česnavičius continued.

Regarding a visit by the Holy Father to Lithuania, it was explained that this does not fall within the competence of the bishops or the government of Lithuania. This is a matter between Moscow and the Vatican,

and they do not have diplomatic ties... "Is it possible to invite the man to the Soviet Union," the speaker lectured, "who has called Communism and the socialist system the shame of the 20th Century, and has received in audience that infamous anti-Soviet Jewess, the wife of Sakharov?"

After the lecture, bishops and administrators of the dioceses were driven to a film studio where they were shown a new documentary film concerning the so-called freedom of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. The film consists of various church ceremonies in which the bishops of Lithuania took part. It is clearly intended for propaganda abroad. Occasional holiday festivities fail to disguise the painful day-to-day reality of the persecuted Church.

To: The Ordinary of the Archdiocese of Kaunas
and of the Diocese of Vilkauskis, Archbishop Liudvikas Povilonis
Copies to: The Chairmen of the Executive Committees of the
Lazdijai, Jonava and Kedainiai Rayons
From: The Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Petras Anilionis

An Announcement

We would like to announce to you that the pastor of the religious community (parish - Tran. Note) of Kapčiamiestis, the Reverend Ignas Plioraitis; the pastor of Panoteriai, the Reverend V. K. Pesliakas and the pastor of Josvainiai, the Reverend L. Kalikauskas, are preventing believers from signing the 1968 Model Contract with Rayon Executive Committees Regarding the use of Houses of Prayer and the Inventories of Objects of Cult Contained Therein. We remind you that in the entire republic, only the aforesaid three communities remain without signed contracts.

We ask you to influence the Reverends Plioraitis, Pesliakas and Kalikauskas not to interfere in the economic affairs of the religious community, and not to pose obstacles to the believers' signing a contract no later than February 1 inst.

Otherwise, the Office of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, in accordance with the law, will give its approval to the Executive Committees of Lazdijai, Jonava and Kedainiai to use the houses of prayer of the religious associations of Kapčiamiestis, Panoteriai and Josvainiai for other purposes.

Moreover, we wish to announce that in the future, we will not certify ministers for the religious associations of Kapčiamiestis, Panoteriai and Josvainiai since these parishes will not have any house of prayer.

We await your decision.

To: Archbishop Liudvikas Povilonis, Diocese of Vilkauskis
Petras Anilionis, Commissioner for Religious Affairs

From: The Faithful of the Kapčiamiestis parish

A Petition

...According to the *Regulations for Religious Associations*, confirmed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR, July 28, 1976, the faithful are deprived of freedom of conscience, the atheists are crassly interfering in the internal affairs of the Church, and Article 52 of the Constitution is being contravened.

Here we mention only a few articles of the *Regulations for Religious Associations* which are unacceptable to us, the faithful:

Art. 1-3 speaks of believing citizens, members of a religious association, who have reached eighteen years of age. According to this article, those under the age of eighteen are not part of the religious association and cannot take part in services. This means that our children cannot pray. This article is wrecking the families of us believers. Why are atheists allowed to conduct organized atheistic education without waiting for children to reach the age of eighteen?

Art. 2-18: "The teaching of religion is allowed only in spiritual schools (seminaries -- Tran. Note)." Question: Where in Kapčiamiestis is there such a school where our children could learn the truths of religion? Since there is no such school here, and it is forbidden to learn the truths of religion elsewhere, we, the faithful understand that this article takes away freedom of conscience from us.

Art. 3-19: "The locale of the activity of ministers of cult is restricted..." We the faithful understand that the activities of the clergy are regulated by the bishop and not by the faithful, all the less by atheists.

Art. 4,22-25: "...property contributed by believers for cult requirements belongs to the state." We the faithful, making an offering to the Church, have no intention of giving it to the state or to government atheists. This assignment of property is mentioned in Art. 34, where the donations made by the faithful are siphoned off into the coffers of the atheists. This is robbery of the faithful.

Art. 5,30-44: Twelve whole articles are devoted to speaking about and at the same time threatening us, the faithful, saying that the church can be closed, that the priest and the parish executive committee can be indicted, and that our priest can be taken away from us. This is an infringement of religious freedom. A decision in such a case can be made only by the spiritual leadership together with the faithful.

At the end of October, 1985, Chairwoman Mrs. Elvira Garbenčienė of the Executive Committee of the District of Kapčiamiestis, summoned our pastor Father Ignas Plioraitis, Chairman Bronius Midlauskas of the parish executive committee and the secretary, Mrs. Janina Margelienė. In the presence of a witness. Secretary Veronika Stravinskienė, of the District of Kapčiamiestis, acquainted him with a communication from Petras Anilionis, Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs:

The Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs
Attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR

Final Warning

To: The Executive Organ of the Kapčiamiestis Religious Association:
Bronius Miliauskas, Petro; Genė Lazauskienė, Vinco;
Antanas Mikolonis, Mato.

It has been determined that the organ of the Catholic community of Kapčiamiestis, regardless of repeated urgings by the local government, has not put together a group of parish incorporators (a group of twenty) to sign a contract according to the new model with the Executive Committee of the Rayon for the use, without charge, of the house of prayer and of the inventory therein for cult needs, and articles of artistic or cultural value.

I demand that the executive organ of the Kapčiamiestis community enter into a contract with the Executive Committee of the Rayon of Lazdijai by November 1 of the current year for the use of the house of prayer. I warn the members of the executive organ that if the contract is not signed, the religious community's registration is liable to suspension, and the church, because it being used without a contract, to closure.

(Seal)

Commissioner for the Council
(Signed) P. Anilionis

Not one of the parishioners mentioned acknowledged the warning in writing. In view of the situation, after the final warning, we the faithful of the parish of Kapčiamiestis, are forced to sign contract forms since the church is liable to be closed and the priest removed from our parish.

In the event of any inspection of the church, no fewer than five persons from among the faithful agree to participate along with the government representatives.

Kapčiamiestis, January 1986 Signatures of the faithful:
(Signed by 103 faithful of the parish of Kapčiamiestis)

The underground Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights has issued Document No. 7, addressed to a priest of Lithuania whose activities and views have begun to coincide too suspiciously often with ideas being urged by the KGB. The purpose of the document is to ask him to think it over and not to demean or condemn the priest himself. It is human to err, but to remain in error...

God grant that all those whom the KGB is trying to deceive would be wise and not allow themselves to be misled by trickery. We ask you not to forget this intention in your prayers.

V i l n i u s

Not long ago, all diocesan chanceries received a communication from the Chairman of the Liturgical Commission of Lithuania, the Rev. V. AI iulis, as follows:

"We have been informed that in government publications, instances of repression during the era of the so-called cult of personality must not be mentioned in biographies or necrologies. Thus, In the obituary of a priest who was Imprisoned, say from 1949 until 1957, one must write: "...Until 1949, he was pastor of ... From 1957, began working as an emeritus, etc., and the period from 1949 must not be mentioned.

"See there! In a priest's obituary, one must not mention a whole period of years, the most fruitful years of priestly life. Why? Perhaps so that everyone would think that during those years the priest had abandoned the priesthood? Or in order to contribute to the further distortion of our nation's history?

"One preacher at a priest's funeral, instead of saying outright that the deceased had suffered in prison camp, expressed it by saying that he had a compulsory vacation. The faithful were scandalized and the preacher was criticized not only by the clergy, but by the faithful themselves."

K a u n a s

Commissioner Petras Anilionis of the Council for Religious Affairs is crudely interfering in clergy appointments. The chancery of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis wanted to appoint as pastor of the parish of Rudamina, in place of Father Juozas Zdebskis who had been killed, Father Jonas Gražulis, and after him, Father Petras Dumbliauskas. The Commissioner stated that these priests cannot be pastors of Rudamina, because if they were in Rudamina, he is convinced that miracles would begin taking place at the grave of Father Zdebskis, and Father Zdebskis would be proclaimed a saint.

Another list of appointments was drawn up and submitted, and it was suggested that Father Gražulis be appointed as pastor of Meteliai, but Anilionis' office protested this time, too, saying that by being pastor of Meteliai, he would be near his brother, Antanas Gražulis, who might be a "bad" influence on him, and make him into an extremist.

To: General Secretary of the Central Committee of the
Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev

Copies to: The Bishops and Diocesan Administrators of Lithuania
Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Petras Anilionis
Executive Committee of the City of Alytus

From: Father Antanas Gražulis
residing at:
Lietuvoje, Alytaus m.
Pušyno 6

A Petition

For three years now, the Executive Committee of the City of Alytus has been punishing me with a fine.

On January 5, 1984, the Administrative Commission, made up of Chairwoman Mrs. B. Butvinienė, Secretary Mrs. Lėlienė, and members Mrs. Petraitiienė and Mrs. Emičienė, penalized me in accord with the decision of the Alytus City Council, March 24, 1982, with a fine of 10 rubles because, "On December 28, 1983, at about 7:30 P.M., in the churchyard, I broadcast services over a loudspeaker, and so disturbed the peace for residents of the neighborhood."

I have never had occasion to hear of an official public law forbidding the broadcasting of services over a loudspeaker. After all, loudspeakers are publicly used on Soviet holidays; e.g., At New Year's in Alytus, the broadcasting over the public address system is so loud in the streets that it even interferes with services inside the church. Every Saturday and Sunday, the sound emanates from the *Nemunas* Restaurant until 1:00 AM, disturbing sleep, but for this no one is punished. Is this not discrimination?

On February 14, 1985, that same Administrative Committee of the City of Alytus, in accordance with Resolution 124, fined me 50 rubles for organizing a Christmas party for pre-school children in the churchyard of Alytus, December 18, 1984 (actually, the 26). By doing so, I allegedly caused a disturbance, I disturbed the peace, thereby transgressing the May 12, 1966 *Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR*.

The Christmas party was organized not just for children of pre-school age, but also for their parents. Santa Claus greeted all the participants in the services, adults and children alike. The disturbance was caused, so the people said, by the teenagers of unbelieving parents.

On January 16, 1986, the Administrative Commission, consisting of Chairman A. Afanov, Vice Chairman G. Čepas, Secretary Lėlienė, and member Mrs. J. Smečienė, in accordance with Resolution No. 65, penalized me with 50-ruble fine. The reason: On the wall of the house of prayer, was hung an illuminated cross, and next to it, an illumination with the legend, "Merry Christmas", and a curtain with a picture of the Castle of Trakai.

After the sermon, small religious pictures were distributed to the children. In this way, Par. 214 of the Code of Misdemeanors of the LSSR was violated.

The Administrative Commission thinks that an illuminated Christmas tree, a crucifix, a banner, a sermon and a curtain on which a picture of the Castle of Trakai was drawn has no tie with the performance of cult. The 1985 Edition of the *Dictionary of International Words* defines the word "cult" as follows: "...adoration, religious actions... hymns."

Hence, religious cult is the worship of God, and the illuminated cross, the greeting, the sermon (which by the way, I did not preach), the hymns of the faithful and little religious pictures -- are these not ways of worshipping God? And how to worship God in the church and in the churchyard is determined not by the Executive Committee, but by the

spiritual leadership.

Our church is tiny, and on the solemn feasts, many people do not get in. Hence, it is necessary to set up the churchyard for the celebration.

The services were attended by a mixed audience, that is, not only by children, but also by their parents. Here, they all prayed according to Christmas tradition and they were all greeted by Santa Claus.

The Soviet school has begun to imitate the religious traditions of the Christmas tree and Santa Claus. They moved the Christmas party to New Year's Day, and renamed Santa Claus "Father Frost". Hence, no one of sound mind and no law can consider a Christmas party with the tradition of Santa Claus as a criminal offense. If this tradition is bad, and punishable, then why has the Soviet government laid claim to it?

Do such attacks and punishments not compromise the officials themselves? In what other state are people punished for such innocent things?

... I request that you revoke the fine designated and see to it that officials would not repeat such irregularities which compromise them. Alytus, January 30, 1986

Ū d r i j a (Alytus Rayon)

Last summer, for teaching children catechism, the Reverend Vytautas Insoda, pastor of Ūdrija, was fined 50 rubles.

T y t u v é n a i (Kelmė Rayon)

On August 21, 1985, classmates who had finished the Kaunas Theological Seminary in 1948, came to the church in Tytuvėnai, where Canon Liudvikas Semaška works. Many of the faithful participated in the solemn services, among them no small number of youth. After the solemnities, the youth greeted the priests and presented them with flowers. All this was photographed. After services, a KGB agent hurried to the photographer's side, confiscated his camera, exposed the film, and after warning them not to take any more pictures, he withdrew.

B a l b i e r i š k i s (Alytus Rayon)

In October, 1985, in the church of Balbieriškis, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Msgr. Mykolas Krupavičius, his friends and relatives requested a Mass. Father Juozas Berteška, pastor of Balbieriškis, offered it and delivered the sermon. The authorities considered it a great crime. Mass must not be offered for Msgr. Krupavičius, since it seems according to officials, that he was an anti-Soviet. For this "crime", Father Berteška was reprimanded by the authorities.

Š i r v i n t a i

On March 18, 1986, Rayon parish church committees were summoned to

the Executive Committee of the Širvintai Rayon . For two and a half hours, Commissioner Petras Anilionis interpreted for those assembled material from the XXVII Party Congress, emphasizing complete freedom of religion. When believers asked whether they are allowed to organize May devotions in villages without a priest, the Commissioner sternly objected to it. Moreover, the lecturer scolded those assembled for All Souls' processions to cemeteries, and mentioned as an example the parish of Kiaukliai, whose pastor, Father Rokas Puzonas, was fined 50 rubles for a procession to the cemetery, while the pastor of the parish of Čiobiškis, Father Kastytis Krikščiukaitis, was punished with a 30-ruble fine.

K a u n a s

On January 15, 1986, Father Albinas Graužinas, and the pastor of the Carmelite parish of the Holy Cross, Father Kazimieras Statkevičius, were summoned before Vice Chairman Kazakavičius of the Kaunas City Executive Committee. The Vice Chairman accused the priests of harboring extremists, of allowing various youth gatherings to take place in the churches, etc. The Vice Chairman angrily called the Santa Claus holiday organized in churches December 29, 1985, an anti-Soviet spectacle. The pastors explained that the parish faithful gathered with their children at the Christmas trees set up in the churches... and what is a Christmas tree without Santa Claus? As with every Christmas tree, so here. The children recited verses. Kazakavičius demanded that the pastors forbid extremists to show themselves in church (as an example, he mentioned Miss A. Raižytė), not to allow youth to assemble, and not to organize any shows. The pastor of Petrašiūnai, Father Graužinas, explained that Miss A. Raižytė works in church doing her job well.

The Vice Chairman became angry. "We know how she works," shouted Kazakevičius, "let her clean the church and do what she is supposed to do, and not organize anti-Soviet shows on various occasions, or organize young people!"

The Vice Chairman reminded the pastor about the Easter procession the previous year, in which girl adorers decked out in green, yellow and red dresses carried ribbons, for which the pastor was summoned in the Spring to see Vice Chairwoman Mrs. Bužinskienė of Kaunas, in the Panemunė Rayon, and Commissioner Petras Anilionis of the Council for Religious Affairs.

Š i a u l i a i

On March 20, 1986, the Commissioner for Religious Affairs came to Šiauliai and "instructed" the Committees of Twenty of the Šiauliai City and Rayon religious associations. (Parishes -- Trans. Note) Anilionis explained the decisions of the Communist Party Congress in which the complete equality of believers with the atheists is emphasized. No one has the right to persecute or condemn individuals for their beliefs. No one has the right to enter in on documents or certificates that they are believers. "This is a matter of each one's conscience," explained the Commissioner. He even read a few lines from the Constitution, by which

citizens' freedom of conscience is guaranteed.

Parades are allowed only at song festivals, May 1, on Revolution Day, but by no means to Šiluva, since there, the purpose is bad, to overthrow the Soviet system.

The lecturer severely condemned the arrested priests and, in his words, other extremists, who under cover of religion slander Soviet reality. He also related that In 1985, 30 churches In Lithuania were burglarized but the culprits were all apprehended and punished, thanks to Soviet officials.

The Commissioner was glad that churches in the City of Šiauliai had not been burglarized. At the end of his talk, he invited questions. Standing up in the hall, Juozas Šileikis said that it was not true that criminals had not broken into churches in Šiauliai. "It occurs quite frequently. Last winter, too, they had broken in, even breaking several door locks, only they had been unable to open the doors, so they broke the windows, vandalized mosaics and, with the aid of ropes, let themselves down inside. However, they did not run rampant for long. Breaking into the tabernacle, they set off an alarm, and they had to flee, leaving behind not only their booty, which they had all prepared, but also their burglars' tools, a special sack and ropes on the windows. Here, no one goes after such criminals, and if the faithful themselves apprehend them and bring them to the militia, even then, no one punishes them," said Šileikis.

A few years ago, in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in Šiauliai, church employees noticed a woman of Russian nationality on the altar, looking around for something worthwhile to steal. The aforesaid "visitor" was taken to the militia. The Soviet officials merely required the thief to apologize to the pastor. And so it all ended!

On another occasion, in daylight, four young men collected whatever rugs pleased them. In the churchyard, they were spotted by church employees, and one of them was apprehended. Frightened, he gave away the others. Everything was reported to the militia. Church employees had to go to the militia many times, until finally it was explained to them that the aforesaid young men had done nothing, had committed no crime -- they had been acting on atheistic principles.

Šileikis further protested that it was not true that it is not noted in documents that one is a believer. "I would gladly agree to have a notation in my passport that I am a Catholic... All three of my children attending Middle School V have it entered in their records that they are believers, indeed fanatical believers, while in the record of my daughter Vita, the entire family is described: 'The girl is deeply believing, the entire family adheres strongly to its religious obligations and the father boasts of it publicly. Private talks and education have not produced any results.'"

Šileikis' speech did not please the Commissioner, especially since he had mentioned the woman of Russian nationality.

Moreover, the Commissioner was annoyed with Mečislovas Jurevičius who, according to him, had blood on his hands and after serving twenty-five years, had not mended his ways, and had led the procession in

Meškuičiai (to the Hill of Crosses), and was sentenced to three years in prison.

M o s é d i s (Skuodas *Rayon*)

On the night of December 30-31, 1985, some statuettes were stolen from the gates of/the churchyard of Mosėdis: Saint Michael the Archangel, highly prized by **The** faithful, and Saint Florian. The thieves brought a ladder and, taking the statuettes, left it at the gate. Even though the statuettes are protected by the state as artistic monuments, nevertheless, the government is not looking for them very hard.

At the same time, other shrines of Samogitia were despoiled.

M u s n i n k a i (Širvintai *Rayon*)

On February 15, 1986, the funeral of Leonas Sadzevičius, a resident of the Village of Paširvintai, was being held in the Musninkai parish church. The daughter of the deceased, Dr. Raudeliūnienė, works in the Širvintai *Rayon* Hospital as Directress of the LOR Section. The *Rayon* Party Secretary warned Dr. Raudeliūnienė not to go to church for her father's funeral, or else she should resign.

S k a u d v i l é (Taurage *Rayon*)

On February 21, 1986, Father Stanislovas Sakutis died. The priest was waked in church, where daily crowds of people gathered, especially in the evening. In an effort to interfere with the participation of the faithful in the services, on Sunday, February 23, a district family holiday was organized. However, the church was full of people nevertheless.

On Sunday, the faithful of Adakavas decided to sing the "The Hills" (Traditional services at outdoor shrines -- Trans. Note). That evening, the government announced a free concert for the citizens of Adakavas, to be held in the House of Culture. Free buses transported people to the concert. The faithful used the opportunity to travel to Skaudvile, but they went... to church, and the hall where the concert was supposed to take place was empty.

February 25, the day of the funeral, the Vaidiliai soviet farm obliged all those working to sign a promise to attend a meeting regarding accounting for the farm. A bus transported people, but the people went to church this time, too. In school, pupils were warned that for taking part in a priest's funeral, they would pay dearly. To the more zealous church attendees, the teachers whispered, "Come to school in the morning and check in, and later, after a class or two, unnoticed by anyone, you can go to the funeral."

But when the pupils assembled, the school became a prison. The pupils' books were locked up, teachers guarded the exits and schoolchildren were herded into the auditorium for a meeting. Ordinarily, during the intermission, schoolchildren run off to stores, but that day, no one was able to leave. In spite of all measures, great crowds of the

faithful participated in the funeral.

After the funeral, Chairwoman Bernikiené of the Executive Committee, sent reports to high levels concerning participants at the funeral.

K i a u k I i a i (Širvintai Rayon)

On November 18, 1985, members of the Kiaukliai church committee: Stasys Andrikonis, Vytautas Nusevičius, Stasys Markauskas, Juozas Mackela and Vaclovas Dijokas were summoned to the Širvintai Rayon Executive Committee. They were received by Kizas, a representative of the Council for Religious Affairs. With him was an unknown official. Kizas was annoyed at everything: a procession to the cemetery, catechizing of children, a sermon in which the priest-prisoners were mentioned. The members of the committee courageously defended their pastor, explaining that the All Souls' procession did not bother anyone, and as for the ringing of the bells which allegedly interfered with the children's lessons, a greater disturbance was caused by trucks especially sent with gravel behind the procession of the faithful. Going to the cemetery is a parish tradition of many years' standing, and the faithful demanded that the pastor come along. At the same time, the parishioners rejoiced that their pastor, Father Rokas Puzonas, was very good to them: He treated all parishioners equally, helped wherever he could, and the accusations of the authorities were unfounded, vain tantrums.

The government representative dared to lie, saying that their parish alone of all the parishes in Lithuania organized an All Souls' procession. He calumniated the imprisoned priests, claiming that they had urged from the pulpits the shooting of Communists.

On November 22, parish committee members sent the Commissioner for Religious Affairs and the editors of the *Peasants' Newspaper* a complaint about the interrupted All Souls' procession. The protest was signed by fifty-seven persons.

On December 25, the parish committee received Petras Anilionis' reply, that their complaint had been forwarded to the Širvintai Rayon for consideration. The *Peasants' Newspaper* for December replied to the people of Kiaukliai with an article entitled "From Unpublished Letters", accusing the leaders of the Catholic Community and Father Puzonas of transgressing the *Regulations for Religious Associations*.

On December 18, District Chairman Vladas Karaliūnas, presented himself at the parish rectory with a few staff members and read a document from teachers of the Kiaukliai Elementary School, requesting him to forbid the pastor to ring the bells on work days between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Allegedly, it interfered with lessons. The pastor explained that there was no possibility of scheduling funerals for another time. Chairman wrote up a report concerning the All Souls' procession.

On December 25, 1985, the first day of Christmas, Father Puzonas was summoned to the rayon where his case was up for deliberation. The priest did not go to the rayon and some members of the church committee who went paid a 10 ruble fine for the All Souls' procession.

IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

Š i a u l i a i

On August 28, 1985, Jonas Jurevičius, Methods Specialist in the Šiauliai Rayon Department of Education, was summoned before Education Department Director Krūmas. The director asked Jurevičius whether he had been to church for the funeral of his neighbor, Greičius. When the methods specialist explained that he had stopped by for a few minutes (he had left work with the permission of his immediate superior), the director threatened to discharge him from his position for alleged dereliction of duty. He said he should have done so long ago, just on account of his brother, Mečislovas Jurevičius.

A few days later, Jurevičius was again summoned to the director's office. Awaiting him here were Chairwomen Mrs. Dirvonskienė, of the rayon teachers' union, Party Secretary Mrs. Mečvienė and others. Jurevičius was told that this was no place for him to be working, and by order of Rayon party Secretary Miss Abkaitė, he was discharged from his current duties. Director Krūmas demanded that he sign a statement saying that he had resigned his duty voluntarily; otherwise the appropriate paragraph would be entered in his work permit, and he would not get work anywhere. Thus Methods Specialist Jurevičius, after working in the Education Department for seventeen years, awarded the badge of a leader in LSSR education, and citations, was forced to leave his job. Presently he is working in the Ginkūnai Elementary School as an ordinary teacher.

A u k š t e k l é (Šiauliai Rayon)

In 1980, former director Dargužas of the Aukšteklė Elementary School was being buried. Since the deceased was being interred with the rites of the Church, in spite of his great services to the educational system (during the post-war era he had collected money and built a school), schoolchildren and teachers were strictly forbidden to participate.

K i a u k l i a i (Širvintai Rayon)

On October 21, 1985, the Director of the Pioneers, at the Kiaukliai Elementary School, Mrs. Lapėniene, and Vice Principal Kaliniņa, took Fourth Class student Inga Zvingevich to a ?school. The teachers scolded the girl for having gone to church and to the rectory several times, and demanded a promise that such transgressions would not be repeated. The teachers unbuttoned the pupil's uniform, checking to see whether there was any religious medal on her neck.

On October 24, Kaliniņa and other teachers interrogated Miss Zvingevich, asking how many times she had been in church and in the rectory. Inga returned to the classroom weeping. Believing pupils comforted her and urged her not to be afraid of threats. After school, Inga's homeroom teacher, Mrs. Kvacksienė, and Teachers Kalinina and Kadžiulis, drove her home and forced her mother to sign an explanation for

her daughter's "crime". They obliged the mother to take Inga each day from school directly home just so she would not mingle with believing friends.

Sixth class pupil Dainius Matijošius of that same school, who is a believer and so stopped wearing the Pioneer's neckerchief was scolded by school principal Mrs. Grigaitienė, Teachers Lapenienė and others. Mrs. Lapenienė took Dainius to class and put on his the kerchief. Someone had already complained that on October 20. in the neighboring parish of Zalva. during a religious festival, the boy had served at Mass, so the teachers sneered, "You see, you prayed too little, and so today you forgot your pen..."

Lithuanian, remember that:

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas
Father Sigitas Tamkevičius
Father Jonas Matuionis
Docent Vytautas Skuodis
Viktoras Petkus
Jadvyga Bieliauskienė
Liudas Dambrauskas
Balys Gajauskas
Gintautas Iešmantas
Vladas Lapienis
Romas Žemaitis
Julius Sasnauskas
Povilas Pečeliūnas

and others bear the bonds of imprisonment so that you might be able to live and believe in freedom.

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