



**CHRONICLE OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA**

No.77, May 5, 1988

American Publication September 28, 1988

CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
LITHUANIA No. 77

A Translation of the Complete Lithuanian Original
LIETUVOS KATALIKŲ BAŽNYČIOS KRONIKA Nr. 77
Documenting the Struggle for Human Rights
In Soviet-Occupied Lithuania Today

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Published by: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid
351 Highland Blvd.
Brooklyn NY 11207

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ISSN 0197-0348

COVER: This cross was erected in honor of the 600th Anniversary of the Baptism of Lithuania. Located in the courtyard of SS. Peter and Paul Church in Siauliai, the inscription at the base reads: "The pagan fires died in the light of the Cross".

Printed at Franciscan Press, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.

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Read this and pass it on!

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA, NO. 77

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Lithuania May 7, 1988

HAIL THE HEROES OF CHURCH AND NATION!

On December 2, last year, we commemorated the 101st birthday of one of the most outstanding members of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, one of our foremost men of science, and citizens, Pranas Dovydaitis. The commemoration was held at the Carmelite Church in Kaunas. The preacher described in depth the multi-faceted activities of Pranas Dovydaitis, his service to the Catholic Church and to Lithuanian science.

Dovydaitis, by harmonizing his public and scientific endeavors with the truths of Christ's Gospel, became an example to us Lithuanians, a guiding star for all walks of life. His directives and advice to the teachers of Lithuania and the shapers of her culture have not lost their relevance to this day.

On January 27, 1988, during evening services in the church of Prienai, Professor Antanas Maceina was memorialized. Such commemorations are gradually becoming traditional. It is most regrettable that the average listener or reader in Lithuania does not have the opportunity to investigate the literary and philosophical legacy of Antanas Maceina. This is a great loss for everyone, but especially for the younger generation. Such commemorations make it possible to become more familiar with one of the most significant and creative minds in Christian philosophy, not only in Lithuania, but in all of Western Europe.

Also becoming traditional are commemorations of the Blessed Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, not only in Marijampolė (Headquarters of the Marian Congregation which Blessed Jurgis reformed. Now known as Kapsukas – Trans. Note), but in other churches of Lithuania as well. On January 30-31, 1988, such an impressive commemoration took place in the Carmelite Church in Kaunas. It is good that preachers are constantly revealing to the faithful ever new traits of the character and activity of Blessed Jurgis, especially in the field of pastoral activity.

In public and political life, the word stagnation has become fashionable. Who knows but that this word fits us Catholics... As long as we were longing for the beatification of Archbishop Matulaitis, his name was repeated in almost every Mass. Now that the goal has been attained - silence. It is essential to be aware of the fact that a Lithuanian, our fellow countryman and companion (for some of us, actually a contemporary), our spiritual guide, Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, can be our intercessor in all matters before the Throne of God.

The life and activity of Archbishop Matulaitis is a proof that even in these difficult times of government atheism, it is possible and essential to remain loyal to the Church of Christ, to the Gospel he proclaimed. If we wish to build rather than wreck, we must burn like a candle on the altar of the Lord, following the example of Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis, instead of smoldering like

ashes in worldly meeting halls.

On February 5, 1988, in the Church of Rudamina, a commemoration of the second anniversary of the death of Father Juozas Zdebskis took place. Participating were His Excellency Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, many of the late Father Zdebskis's kindred spirits from among clergy and laity, and of course, as always in such a case, a group of observers from the atheistic government. Bishop Steponavičius and the priests who preached took a fresh look at many of those problems and tasks which always preoccupied the late Father Zdebskis.

For instance, how to remain completely faithful to the Church which Christ established, the Gospel He proclaimed, even in these times so unfavorable to religion; national morality; heroic love of neighbor, etc. In accord with these, Father Zdebskis arranged his activities as man and as priest. The example of Father Zdebskis is a unique instance of contemporary Catholic action.

His ability to master such a wide range of altruistic activities is very appealing. "Everything takes effort," he often used to say, "effort and practical charity. This is the sign by which disciples of Christ will be known."

After the gravestone was blessed, all sang, "*Marija, Marija,*" "*Lietuva brangi*" and "*Lietuva tėvynė mūsų*" (A popular Marian hymn, a patriotic hymn and the national anthem of Independent Lithuania. — Trans. Note) At Father Zdebskis's grave, Robertas Grigas spoke in the name of the young people. He invited them to support the Eucharistic movement actively and, by their personal example through self-sacrificing love of Christ and Church, to contribute to the speedier resurrection of the nation.

People sent by the government tried to disturb the orderliness of the commemoration, but not a single person showed up in their midst who would dare to stand up and be counted. The only thing heard was behind-the-scenes criticism of each other, "Why didn't you speak up?", etc. They contented themselves with the usual photographing of participants and the recording of license numbers.

A commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Msgr. Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas was held in the light of events of February 16. Services took place in the Cathedral of Kaunas February 21. A state of undeclared war was still in effect in the city. The services and their participants were closely watched by KGB agents. During the services, two sermons were preached: one by Bishop Juozas Preikšas, and the other by the rector of the seminary in Kaunas, Father Viktoras Butkus.

Bishop Preikšas explored in depth the work of Msgr. Jakštas-Dambrauskas, his great contribution to Lithuanian culture, to public life and to the development of religious consciousness.

After the services, the faithful assembled at his grave prayed together, recited poetry and sang hymns. At the end, the national anthem of Independent



Demonstrators on February 16, 1988, in Vilnius.

Lithuania was sung.

This year of 1988 was unusual for our nation. On February 16, 1918, taking advantage of historical circumstances, Lithuania was able to proclaim itself as a sovereign state. February 16 marked seventy years since this historical fact, inestimably precious to every Lithuanian. Our nation is subjugated, but the desire for freedom lives; it manifests itself February 16 every year, on holidays special to our nation, and especially this jubilee year.

This year, the government atheists, in their propaganda activities, have publicized this date as never before. Well before the jubilee, in republic and *rayon* newspapers and magazines, columns appeared vying with each other in anger, and not infrequently, in calumny. Nor did television or radio slumber. Here, all those who in any way urged a commemoration of February 16, were each taken to task several times a day. Special objects of anger were President of the U.S.A., Ronald Reagan and Western radio broadcasts.

In factories and offices, workers were forced to sign a document saying that they wish to live within the U.S.S.R. forever. In cities and towns, compulsory meetings were held against the commemoration of February 16 (in some cases, participants were even promised monetary prizes); students and school children were pressured to attack President Ronald Reagan of the U.S.A., accusing him of interfering in the internal affairs of the "Union", and shouting in-

cessantly, "We are annoyed!" "Who gave the organizers of February 16 the right?" "We will not stand for commemorations of February 16!"

Government officials, factory and office directors, forgetting restructuring and democratization, threatened dissident individuals as never before with Stalin-era repression: demotion, expulsion from work (cutting back of jobs!), truncheons and deprivation of freedom.

More active and nationally sophisticated Lithuanians had to be sent to other republics on assignment, and there were many warnings handed out in the offices of the KGB, militia, and local procurators. Placing flowers on the graves of freedom-fighters is treated as a terrible offense against the Soviet government. All that is well-known to those living in the Soviet Union, and more than one has experienced it personally.

The bishops of Lithuania were warned by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet concerning February 16; priests and members of church committees, by *Rayon* Executive Committees (Almost all the priests of Lithuania were personally visited by the *rayon*, and some of them even by Vilnius KGB).

For approximately ten evenings preceding February 16 in Lithuania, something amounting almost to a military alert began, which lasted ten more days after February 16: in the streets, in the squares and even in the cemeteries, militia-men were on duty and auxiliary policemen from all agencies were assigned to assist them, while above all, the KGB closely monitored the situation.

The government atheists, fearing an aroused public, isolated from the August 23 demonstration the more active participants and organizers, placing them under house arrest. Other Catholic activists were rounded up in the streets February 16, and taken to militia stations on the grounds that they were suspicious persons.

And still the commemorations of the anniversary took place, closely associated with the Church this year, as never before. In many churches in Lithuania, beginning Sunday, February 14, services were held for Lithuania. The more zealous priests preached sermons dedicated especially to the nation's anniversary. Led by the youth, the faithful made the Way of the Cross and said the *Angelus* in the churches after Mass, recalling those who gave their lives for the independence of Lithuania.

In some parish churches, the faithful organized adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the day, praying God's forgiveness for the nation's sins and begging His blessing. After services, the national anthem of Independent Lithuania was sung, as well as "*Lietuva brangi*" by Maironis and Naujelis. On this occasion, in honor of those who sacrificed and worked for the nation's freedom, flowers were placed at the grave of those who signed the Declaration of Independence on February 16, the graves of our fellow countrymen who died for liberty, and historical monuments dear to the nation (they were immediately thrown away by KGB agents and militiamen on duty.)

In the largest cities of Lithuania, the army was drawn up, vans for hauling people away were concealed in yards, masses of KGB and militia were on duty with the assignment of operationally taking care of the slightest demonstration.

Believers were particularly pained by pastors who not only failed to sustain their fellow citizens' enthusiasm for celebrating the jubilee, but did not even allow them to organize church services for Lithuania or to sing the national anthem of Independent Lithuania, urging them instead to disperse. This was the case in the Church of Vytautas in Kaunas, St. George in Šiauliai and Alytus II.

Every commemoration of our heroes is the peal of a bell, preventing us from becoming oblivious to religious and national spirit. Just as the spirit of the first Christians was their constant support under persecution, so the children of Lithuania must draw strength and perseverance from its saintly sons and daughters.

FROM THE COURTROOM

K a p s u k a s

On January 14, 1988, in the Kapsukas City Internal Affairs Division, a criminal case was brought against Petras Gražulis, an employee at the church in Sasnava. He was accused of deliberately avoiding military training in the Soviet Army.

A session of the court scheduled for January 26 did not take place, because of three witnesses scheduled to testify against Gražulis, two did not show up. The session was postponed to February 2.

On February 2, relatives and several score friends of Petras Gražulis were admitted into the courtroom. The rest of his friends were forced to freeze outside. They were closely watched by militia and KGB agents, who urged them from time to time to disperse. The crowd was constantly videotaped by television technicians especially summoned from Lithuanian television for the occasion.

The court convened at 10:00 A.M. Z. Pečiulis, the President of the Court, began the session by questioning Petras Gražulis:

Q. "Your surname, name and patronymic."

A. "Petras Gražulis, son of Antanas."

Q. "Nationality?"

A. "Lithuanian."

Q. "Citizenship?"

A. "Citizen of Lithuania."

Q. "Not a citizen of the U.S.S.R.?"

A. "No!"

Q. "Party affiliation?"

A. "I am a Catholic."

Q. "Are you an draftee?"

A. "I do not consider myself as a draftee in the Soviet Army."

Petras Gražulis responded to accusations against him regarding "deliberate" avoidance of military training in his January 1988 Open Letter to U.S.S.R. Defense Minister Yazov:

"Having received a summons from the Kapsukas City Commissar to report January 5, 1988, for three months of special training, I understood that they had begun to prepare for February 16. This is a KGB arrangement, so I refused to go for this training. I refused also for the reasons given below:

"1. Believers are persecuted by the state; Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius are in prison; Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, banished for twenty-six years now to Žagarė, is not allowed to function as a bishop. Many churches have been confiscated from the faithful and desecrated. A particularly great injustice was done to the faithful by confiscating the Cradle of Lithuanian Christianity, the Cathedral of Vilnius, and turning it into an art gallery, and confiscating the Church of Lithuania's only saint, Saint Casimir, and establishing in it a Museum of Atheism.

"How can you still require that a believer defend the affairs of such a state?

"2. The demands which I set forth in my petition of November 23 are mere dreams and illusions. There is no hope that in the Soviet Army, consideration be given to the rights of believers. There are grounds for thinking that during training, I could surreptitiously be done away with.

"This intuition is caused by the suspicious circumstances of the death of two young men who distinguished themselves and stood out from others by their enlightened nationalism, their decent conduct, and deep faith. This was the murder of Ričardas Griškaitis, a resident of Kybartai, Komjaunimo 36-54, by hanging (he was buried in Kybartai, November 6, 1987). Also, the murder of Antanas Svinkūnas, a resident of Alytus *Rayon*, Village of Daugirdai. He was buried in Kriokialaukis, November 13, 1987.

"Allegedly, they hanged themselves, but having injuries and stab wounds marking their bodies raised doubts. Suicide is incompatible with Christian morality. Some sort of unseen force is concealing the true culprits. People are saying openly that it is the work of the KGB.

"The faithful in the Soviet Army are persecuted, as witness the example of Robertas Grigas, sacristan at the church in Kiaukliai. More than once during his term of service, he was beaten, threatened with death, duty in Afghanistan, and he was ridiculed. Suffering from dysentery, he was kept for four days in an isolation cell on a cement floor, and deliberately deprived of treatment. According to his testimony, all this was not without the knowledge of the KGB.

"During my own compulsory military service in Padolsk, 1977 - 1979, I was the victim of discrimination, and they threatened to take care of me if I

publicly professed my faith. My religious books were taken away from me. Discharging me from Non-Commissioned Officers' school, they explained that a religious believer cannot be a sergeant, so I was transferred to Briansk, to the 1270th V.S.O. Labor Battalion.

"The fact that I was under constant surveillance in the army I learned from a friend, who, as he told me himself, was obliged by the KGB to watch me. There was even an attempt on my life.

"Sergei Trusov, recruited by the KGB while serving in the Sanitary Unit, used to blurt out to me while drunk that if I continued to believe in God and to serve in this way, I would not go home.

"Even after I returned from the Soviet Army, the persecutions did not abate: by searches, interrogations, and other methods. For example, I was detained by Alytus Auto Inspection Chief Grusok, as allegedly having been involved in a traffic accident. This was a falsehood, since there was neither a smashed car nor an injured person at the Internal Affairs Department.

"The hidden purpose of my being summoned was to accuse me of profanity and interference with the devotions of the faithful while I was collecting signatures in the church of Alytus II, for the release of prisoners. What nonsense, since I never use profanity, especially in church. There were about twenty individuals collecting signatures who could witness to that. However, the judge must carry out the instructions of the KGB unswervingly, since otherwise, he will suffer himself, so President Sabeckis of the High Court sentenced me to ten days in jail.

"I was also detained in Šakiai. The reason for the detention — suspicion for having participated in the burglary of a garage. However, during the interrogation, over two-and-a-half days, the Chief of Criminal Investigation, a major, did not say a word about the burglary of a garage. Carrying out searches of my person, my automobile, and a friend, they presented no warrant, nor did they record the searches.

"During the searches, they were looking for texts with signatures, and during interrogation, they warned me that we should not collect any more signatures because this is a crime. As we see, everywhere there is trickery, deceit, and lying. Apprehended in one matter, I was interrogated in a completely different one. To dissemble and work through the agency of others - this is the KGB method!

"In February 1987, I got to participate in the anniversary of the death of Father Juozas Zdebskis. After the commemoration, I drove Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius to Žagarė. When the steering mechanism of the automobile disconnected, we almost had an accident. Trying to repair the defect, I noticed that the other steering cable had parted. Since the reason the steering had parted was a disconnected nut, it was the opinion of specialists that this could not have happened of itself, all the more since the steering of the automobile and the

brake system had been checked a couple of days earlier in the Alytus Auto Service. Some sort of mysterious evil forces had tried to arrange this accident in the hope of ridding themselves of Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius and myself.

"All this is incompatible with any kind of humanism. I cannot serve in the army of a system which makes attempts on the life and liberty of nations and individuals.

"3. One more very serious reason which I mentioned in my petition of November 23 is the occupation of Lithuania carried out in 1940. It is impossible to hide this shameful Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact known throughout the world, and as long as the Baltic States are subjugated, it will always remind the world how these nations 'joined' the Soviet Union.

"So, there is an army of occupation in Lithuania, and not the government supported by it, nor the courts nor any other organizations evidence justice by their actions but simply carry out the will of the conqueror." (Text has been shortened - Ed. Note)

After deliberation on the case had finished, the accused, Petras Gražulis, was given the opportunity to make a final statement. Gražulis said, "What can I say in my final statement? I shall soon hear your decision. I do not think that it will be just, since this is impossible on the basis of present-day laws which should be renounced for all time.

"As a Christian, I am sorry for you. Perhaps, you will be forced to act against your own free-will and conscience.

"I ask nothing of you. I only trust in the Lord, and commend myself to prayers." Petras Gražulis thanked his parents for their faith and his brothers, sisters, guests, and U.S. Senator Moynihan, for their prayers and support.

After an hour's recess, the decision of the court was read, in which Petras Gražulis was convicted of having committed a crime according to Par. 2/1 Id of the L.S.S.R. *Criminal Code*. He was given a sentence of ten months in prison.

After the judgement had been read, Gražulis tried to address his friends in the courtroom, inviting them to commemorate February 16 with a ten-day fast, but some men in civilian garb jumped up, twisted his arms and stifled his words.

Gražulis was several times struck in the face. His nose began to bleed. The security agents, seizing him by the hands and feet, carried him out of the courtroom.

Later, during a visit with his brothers, Fathers Antanas and Kazimieras, Petras Gražulis declared that during that struggle, officials had used some sort of chemical substance which rendered him unconscious and affected his mind (one side of his face and that eye were red for several days).

After the trial, militia began with German Shepherd dogs to "protect" the friends of Petras Gražulis assembled in the street. Not far away there were

even fire engines waiting for the alarm. A KGB agent in mufti indicated to the militiamen who, from among the group of waiting people, were to be arrested. In this way, several of the more active participants in the Catholic movement were detained: the organist of Gargždai, Bumbulis (later fined 20 rubles). Housekeeper Bronė Valaitytė from the rectory in Sasnava, the sacristan in the parish in Gerdašiai, Gintas Sakavičius, Šiauliai resident Vincas Danielius and Matulaitis from Kapsukas, were sentenced to fifteen days in jail. Antanas Dapkunus, who came to the trial from Alytus, was fined 10 rubles.

After the trial, in protest against the KGB's unjust action against Gražulis, signatures were gathered under a petition to General Secretary Gorbachev of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. In the petition, it states, "We are shocked by the brutal judicial treatment handed out to the young Catholic man, Petras Gražulis, February 2, 1988, in the Peoples' Court of Kapsukas. Gražulis refused to report for special military exercise, arguing that his Christian conscience does not allow him to be a member of an army which is shedding innocent blood in Afghanistan, which has occupied his homeland Lithuania, defends atheistic ideology and persecutes the Church.

"The statement of these principles, the court judged as refusal to report for military exercises out of self-interest, without a serious excuse."

To ridicule a person's conscientious beliefs, all the more to accuse of opportunism a young man going to prison, is inhumane and amoral. In other socialist countries, the possibility of alternative service for individuals unable to serve in the army with weapon in hand, for reasons of conscience or other religious convictions, is under consideration. We demand that such a possibility be established in the Soviet Union, and that Petras Gražulis be freed without delay.

February 3, 1988

Signed by:

Prienai - 909	Pilviškiai - 281
Kalvarija - 1072	Sasnava - 139
Simnas - 510	Lazdijai - 919
Šakiai - 813	Skriaudžiai - 102
Liudvinavas - 274	Kapsukas - 2585
Veiveriai - 91	Krokialaukis - 344
Daukšiai - 165	Kazlų Rūda - 201
Šiluva - 560	Alytus II - 3720
	Alytus I - 201

PETITIONS AND PROTESTS

The Catholics of Lithuania presented to the Delegation of the Inter-

national Helsinki Federation, visiting Moscow at the invitation of the government of the U.S.S.R. at the end of January 1988, this document:

Concerning the Plight of Believers in Lithuania

The plight of believers in the U.S.S.R., and by the same token, in Lithuania which has been annexed to the U.S.S.R., is determined by Soviet law in which, albeit frequently in disguised fashion, it is stated that in the U.S.S.R., religion must be rendered irrelevant. And only because the law is often executed in slipshod fashion, have believers in the Soviet Union so far succeeded in retaining some of their positions.

In the Preamble to the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., it states: "The highest purpose of the Soviet state is to a classless, Communist society... to develop the man of the Communist society..."

In Par. 39, it states: "Citizens making use of their rights and freedoms must not interfere with the interests of society and the state..."

Since the man of Communist society is exclusively atheist, this means that the use of any rights or freedoms in behalf of religion is an infringement of the Constitution.

Par. 25: "In the Soviet Union, there exists and is being perfected a single system of public education which is at the service of the Communist education of the youth..."

No room is left for believers. Those young people who, by some miracle, do not succumb to atheist (Communist) education, become at best, second class citizens.

Freedom of conscience in the Constitution (Par. 52), is understood as "... the right to practice religious cults or to carry on atheistic propaganda..."

This means that religion and religious believers may be attacked by all communications media, and believers cannot defend themselves, carry on counter-propaganda, or all the more, religious propaganda.

Based on these and similar Constitutional grounds, high and mid-level government organs allow laws, orders and regulations discriminating against believers, and government officials know that in the war against religion, it is possible to go too far, while not to go too far is risky because it is possible to lose one's post.

The most obvious discrimination against Catholics in Lithuania is reflected in the *Regulations for Religious Associations*, confirmed by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., July 20, 1976, and still in effect. Art. 17 of these directives says, "Religious organizations do not have the right to organize special meetings of children and youth, nor of workers, literary or other circles or groups having no connection with the carrying out of performing worship services." Art. 18: "The teaching of religion may be allowed only in spiritual schools open according to acceptable procedure."

In Lithuania, only one such school has been allowed, with the number of students strictly limited by the government --the Kaunas Interdiocesan Seminary.

Not only are these two points in the *Regulations* discriminatory, but so are all the others. Throughout, "It is forbidden. It is forbidden. It is forbidden..." Hence, an absolute majority of Catholic priests in Lithuania have addressed to the government a written appeal in which they have refused to conform with the requirements of these *Regulations*. However, the government has paid no attention to this, and officials, basing themselves on these *Regulations*, continue today to terrorize the faithful and especially religiously believing youth.

The restructuring of government attitudes has not touched believers. The laws remain the same. The tendency to remove religion from life not only remains but has been fortified by new urgings by Gorbachev, and in Lithuania, by Communist Party Central Committee Secretary Griškevičius, to step up the war against religion.

This year is a jubilee year for the Catholics of Lithuania - 600 years since the Baptism of Lithuania. On this occasion, the Catholics of Lithuania had hoped to meet with the Pope in their own homeland, especially since the Holy Father himself wished it. The "restructuring" government of the U.S.S.R. did not allow it. Many Catholics of Lithuania wished to participate in the jubilee solemnities at the Vatican. The Soviet government, after promising in Helsinki in 1975 to relax restrictions on contacts between people of various countries, allowed all of eight people to travel to the Vatican, after the KGB had warned them how they should behave there.

To date, contrary to the Helsinki Accords, bringing religious literature to Lithuania from abroad, or its publication internally, is forbidden.

What "bulldozer atheism" (This is what the atheists themselves call the rampaging of the government atheists in the U.S.S.R.!) has wrought during the Soviet era in Lithuania and continues to wreak even, now can be read in the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. In this sole, albeit illegally published Lithuanian Catholic periodical, mistakes (which would seem unavoidable in the underground conditions) show up as a rare exception. The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church* is available at the Lithuanian Mission to the United States and to the Vatican as well as in other countries, in English, German, French, and other languages.

We consider that normal, active religious life in Lithuania will be possible only in the event that the government actively changes its attitude toward religion, basing it on the law.

Lithuania, November, 1987

His Excellency, the Bishop of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavičius - Žagarė
Father Jonas Danyla - Bijutiškis

Father Jonas Zubrus - Kirdeikiai
Father Zenonas Navickas - Saldutiškis
Father Rokas Puzonas - Kiaukliai
Father Kazimieras Gražulis - Šiauliai
Father Gustavas Gudanavičius - Žagarė
Father Edmundas Atkočiūnas - Kuršėnai
Robertas Grigas - Kiaukliai
Nijolė Sadūnaitė - Vilnius
Liudas Simutis - Kaunas
Petras Plumpa - Kulautuva
Saulius Kelpšas - Garliava
Petras Gražulis - Sasnava

To: The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist
Party of the Soviet Union, Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev
Copies to: The Bishops of Lithuania
From: Priests of Lithuania

A Petition

For some time now, the officials of the Soviet government have been saying that *new Regulations for Religious Associations* are in preparation, to conform with the Soviet government's present policy of restructuring and democratization.

When the *Regulations for Religious Associations* in effect today were being prepared in 1976, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church in Lithuania requested of the Soviet government that those *Regulations* be coordinated with the *Canon Law* of the Church, so that believing Catholic laity and clergy would be able to obey them without violating their own consciences.

However, those requests were ignored, and the *Regulations* ordering religious life in our country were drawn up exclusively by atheistically oriented Soviet government officials. So that such a paradoxical situation not be repeated this time, we come to you, General Secretary, requesting you to direct the attention of officials preparing the new *Regulations* to the *Canon Law* of the Church, to international commitments of the U.S.S.R. as signatory to the U.N. *Declaration of Human Rights*, and to the *Helsinki Final Accords*.

The *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 211), obligates every believer to contribute to the dissemination of the Faith, that is, of the teachings of salvation to all the nations of the world. The current *Regulations for Religious Associations* and the corresponding paragraphs in the Lithuanian S.S.R. Constitution (Par. 50 and 52), guarantee the faithful only a fulfilling of their worship obligations, while non-believers are guaranteed the right of conducting atheistic propagan-

da.

This is clearly incompatible with the principle of the equality of all citizens, proclaimed in those very constitutions. The government of the U.S.S.R. has obligated itself to abide by this principle in signing the U.N. *Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Helsinki Final Accords*.

Canon Law (Canons 213 and 278) urges the faithful, laity and clergy, to join in organizations supporting social justice, and works of love of neighbor, for the purpose of developing devotion and Christian living. This right the current *Regulations for Religious Associations* (Par. 17 and 45), do not grant the faithful. Eastern Rite Catholics are forbidden even to carry out worship services, or to gather in religious associations for that purpose.

Church law (Canons 528 and 776) obliges pastors to show special concern for the education and catechization of Catholic children and youth. Canon 532 obliges them to assist parents in their duty of Christian education. How the catechization of youth and children is to be carried out is indicated in seven Canons of the Church's *Canon Law* (Canons 773-780).

The laws promulgated by the state forbid priests or catechists trained for the purpose to teach children catechism. Teaching the truths of religion is allowed only in "spiritual schools, opened in the appropriate manner", that is, theological seminaries where only youth who have attained majority are admitted (see Par. 17 and 18 of the *Regulations for Religious Associations*).

The right to teach children religion is granted only to parents. Atheistic parents, meanwhile, in handing on their views to their children, are able to make use of qualified propagandists of atheism and qualified teachers, as well as the support of the public schools. This is clear inequality before the law for believers.

Priests and lay catechists, fulfilling the serious duty of catechizing children and youth, find themselves in a situation of conflict with laws promulgated by the Soviet government. Canon 1374 of Church *Canon Law* says that those faithful who enroll in organizations working against the Church, are to be penalized by appropriate ecclesiastical penalties, while those who actively support the work of such organizations, draw upon themselves the ecclesiastical penalty of excommunication.

Meanwhile, believing schoolchildren are forced to enroll in atheistic political organizations fighting against religion (Communist Youth, Pioneers, atheistic circles).

Young men enrolling in the theological seminary, some priests, and some laity, are recruited to become what amounts to organizations working against the Church - cooperators with the KGB. The consciences of the faithful and of the younger generation are skewed by such pressures and recruiting measures, thus transgressing the Constitutional principle of freedom of conscience.

Church *Canon Law* (Canon 529) obliges pastors to know the faithful entrusted to them, and to visit their families, but this the priests are forbidden to do by the current *Regulations for Religious Associations* (Par. 45). Not even bishops cannot visit the parishes in their dioceses without the consent of the civil government.

Church *Canon Law* determines that the parish is directed, its affairs are administered, and it is represented by the pastor, with the assistance of faithful laity (532 and 537). However, the *Regulations for Religious Associations*, ratified by the state, require that the parish be led only by a Committee of Twenty, made up entirely of laity, or the association's Executive Committee, in whose makeup priests are forbidden to be included (Par. 11 and 13). Incidentally, neither the group of twenty nor the executive organ of the religious association is granted the status of a juridical person by state law.

Canon Law grants a priest who has been ordained, approved by his bishop, and not suspended by Church authorities, the right and the duty to preach anywhere in the world (Canon 762 and 764). A priest approved by his Ordinary has the right, anywhere (and in the case of a dying patient, even strict duty), of hearing confessions (Canon 967), and also, of holding Mass anywhere in the world (Canon 903). The current *Regulations for Religious Associations* (Par. 19) limit "the area of the activity of ministers of cult and preachers to the place where the members of the religious association serve by them live".

For assisting in parishes other than their own during religious festivals and for preaching sermons at such solemnities, priests are punished by fines and issued warnings by the Commissioner for Religious Affairs. The atheists can invite a clever lecturer to deliver an atheistic lecture, but believers wishing to invite a more talented preacher must obtain permission from officials of the Soviet government propagating atheism.

We wonder whether the atheists would be happy if they had to check their list of atheistic lecturers with the local pastor. The current *Regulations for Religious Associations* place believers in such a position. This is incompatible with the Constitutional principal of equality of citizens before the law.

Canon 235.2 provides for the possibility of young men, under the guidance of a priest appointed by the bishop, to prepare for ordination to the priesthood, even outside the seminary. And yet, priests who have received ordination in this way are not recognized by the government and are not allowed to be assigned to parishes. (Strangely enough, Orthodox and Protestant clergy prepared in this way are recognized by the Soviet government.)

Church law (Canon 279) obliges the priest to continue theological studies even after he has finished the seminary, but for this, serious Catholic theological and philosophical literature is necessary. The Catholics of the U.S.S.R. have no possibility of printing such literature domestically, nor of importing it from abroad (e.g., from peoples' democratic countries such as Poland

or the German Democratic Republic).

In the Lithuanian S.S.R., only religious literature absolutely necessary for the carrying out of ritual is allowed. The faithful are not allowed to establish libraries of religious literature, bookstores, or presses; they cannot make use of radio or television to disseminate religious ideas, while the atheists have the broadest facilities for spreading their world view through these mass media of information. This is a clear example of the inequality of believers and of atheists before the law.

The majority of the residents of Lithuania are believing Catholics. Please provide them the conditions for celebrating at least the Feast of Christmas (December 25).

There are many nursing homes and homes for the aged where the visit of a priest depends entirely on the good-will of the institution's director. Such institutions should have a separate room, a small chapel, where the faithful who are residents of such institutions could meet their religious obligations. But Par. 49 of the present *Regulations for Religious Associations* forbids this.

In drafting the *Regulations*, governing relations between the Church and the Soviet state, it would be well to form a joint commission, consisting of representatives of Church and state. These new *Regulations* should not try to moderate the purely internal life of the Church (for example, they should not direct who should lead a community of the faithful - a parish).

We request the General Secretary to see that in the drafting of the new *Regulations*, consideration be given to the preferences and longings of believers, that these *Regulations* be made compatible with the norms of Church law, that the *Regulations* not force believers to offend against the requirements of Christian morality, and by the same token, that believers not be forced by conscience to ignore them.

March 12, 1988

Signed by the following priests the Diocese of Vilkaviškis:

Vitas Urbonas	Juozas Matulevičius
Juozas Mieldžadys	Vytautas Būdas
Kazimieras Burba	Vytautas Insoda
Albinas Deltuva	Juozas Barteška, Dean
Vaclovas Degutis	Vaclovas Stakėnas
Albinas Jaudegis	Antanas Gražulis
Juozas Šalčius	Antanas Liesis
Juozas Matulaitis	Jonas Boruta
Jonas Maskvytis	Juozas Gumauskas
Boleslovas Čegelskas	Pranas Račiūnas
Antanas Mioldažys	Jonas Baranauskas
Kazimieras Kudirka	Kęstutis Bekasovas

Jonas Rusinas	Msgr. Andrius Gustaitis, Dean
Tadeušas Valianas	Petras Dumbliauskas
Kazimeiras Skučas	Vytautas Prajara
Lionginas Kanevičius	Vincas Čėsna
Valerijus Rudzinskas	Vincas Petruševičius
Jonas Malinauskas	Juozas Užupis
Gvidonas Pušinaitis	Jonas Palukaitis
Vytautas Užkuraitis	Vaclovas Radzevičius
Msgr. Juozas Žemaitis, Dean	Pranas Liutvinas
Jonas Būga	Leonardas Kavaliūnas
Juozas Marčiulionis	Vladas Bobinas
Gintautas Skučas	Raimondas Žukauskas
Bronius Klemensas Paltanavičius	Antanas Lukošaitis
Petras Sitka	Gintautas Steponaitis
Jonas Balionas	Antanas Vitkus
St. Mikalajūnas	Antanas Liubšys
Pranas Perlaitis	Algirdas Pasiliauskas
Vladas Jackūnas	Juozas Gražulis
Boleslovas Ražukas	Alfonsas Sadauskas
Jonas Grudzinskas	Juozas Pečiukonis
Vincas Jalinskas	Gvidonas Dovydaitis
Ignas Plioraitis	Vytautas Vaitauskas, Dean
Juozas Radzevičius	Juozas Klimavičius
Pranas Adomaitis	Vladas Bilius
Jurgis Sventickas	Kazimieras Montvila
	Kęstutis Brilius

Refused to sign, Fathers:

Juozas Barkauskas
 Vytautas-Simonas Guogis
 Vytautas Tėvelis
 Petras Vagneris
 Juozas Jakaitis
 Antanas Maskeliūnas

Others were not located.

To: General Secretary of the Central Committee of the
 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev
 From: Priests of Lithuania

A Petition

We are shocked by the new terrorist attacks against Catholic priests



Robertas Grigas (far left, with rose) on August 23, 1987.

and laity in Lithuania. On August 28, 1987, Father Rokas Puzonas, his sacristan Robertas Grigas, and a zealous Catholic woman, Nijolė Sadūnaitė, were kidnapped by terrorists dressed in civilian garb and military uniform, without being presented with any identification or order, and with the assistance of traffic police.

Those kidnapped were driven about Lithuania and Byelorussia; Nijolė Sadūnaitė for thirty hours, with several terrorist groups spelling each other; Father Rokas Puzonas, ten hours and Robertas Grigas, eight hours.

Father Rokas Puzonas was released in a forest in Byelorussia, 100 km. from Vilnius. Sacristan Robertas Grigas escaped the terrorists in the City of Joniškis, 300 km. from Vilnius.

After the forced "ride", the terrorists warned that if they did not change their attitudes with regard to religious and national questions, it would be worse. The terrorists did not conceal the fact that they were KGB.

A similar act of terrorism was carried out the night of August 22, 1985, against a member of the Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, the Pastor of Kriokialaukis, Father Vaclovas Stakėnas. The terrorists, under the pretext of a sick call, kidnapped him from his home, drove him out into the woods, tortured him and left him tied hand and foot, and gagged, in the depths of the forest at midnight. The perpetrators of the terrorist act have not been dis-

covered to this day.

On September 10, 1987, at about 9:00 P.M., they tied up the Pastor of Gruzdžiai, Father Juozas Čepėnas. For two hours, they took over his apartment and afterwards, stealing his car, they departed for points unknown.

With such terrorist acts taking place, the suspicion arises whether those same forces did not push Father Bronius Laurinavičius under a truck November 24, 1981, and contribute to events connected with the tragic death of Father Juozas Zdebskis, February 5, 1986.

We request that these blatant offenses against justice (the terrorist attacks), be discontinued and the perpetrators punished.

We also request that as the process of restructuring goes on, the convicted priests Father Alfonsas Svarinskas and Father Sigitas Tamkevičius be released, and that Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius be returned to his duties.

January, 1988

Signed by the following priests of the Diocese of Kaišiadorys, Fathers:

J. Danyla, Bijutiškis, Molėtai *Rayon*
Z. Navickas (Dean), Saldutiškis, Utena *Rayon*
K. Kazlauskas, Žiezmariai, Kaišiadorys *Rayon*
R. Puzonas, Kirdeikiai, Utena *Rayon*
Ign. Milašius (Dean), Molėtai
J. Kaminskas, Kuktiškis, Utena *Rayon*
J. Zubrus, Kiaukliai, Širvintai *Rayon*
L. Smalinskas, Misininkai, Širvintai *Rayon*
V. Kiškis, Vievis, Trakai *Rayon*
A. Černa, Vievis, Trakai *Rayon*
P. Krikščiukaitis, Čiobiškis, Širvintai *Rayon*
L. Puzona, Labanoras, Švenčioniai *Rayon*
A. Šatas, Stirniai, Molėtai *Rayon*
A. Araminas, Molėtai *Rayon*
E. Kraujalis, Butrimonys, Alytus *Rayon*
Z. Stančiauskas, Palomenė, Kaišiadorys *Rayon*
J. Čeberiokas, Daugai, Alytus *Rayon*
L. Balionas, Molėtai
P. Venckus, Skudutiškis, Molėtai *Rayon*
P. Šiugžda, Šešuoliai, Ukmergė *Rayon*
P. Civilis, Žiliniai, Varėna *Rayon*
S. Stankevičius, Alovė, Alytus *Rayon*
R. Rumšas, Alytus I
Canon P. Laskauskas, Merkinė, Varėna *Rayon*
J. Kaušyla, Pivašiūnai, Alytus *Rayon*
A. Šilkinis, Punia, Alytus *Rayon*

M. Novickis, Nemunaitis, Alytus *Rayon*
Z. Gustainis (Dean), Birštonas, Prienai *Rayon*
J. Voveris, Vievis, Trakai *Rayon*
J. Lunius, Nemaniūnai, Prienai *Rayon*

Two illegible signatures.

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

From: Catholics of Lithuania

A Petition

In 1987, celebrating the 600-year jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania, we were saddened not to be able to celebrate this jubilee so special to us, in the historical Cathedral of Vilnius — the place where the Baptism of the Lithuanians began, and where the earthly remains of one of the baptizers of Lithuania, Vytautas the Great, rest. The Cathedral of Vilnius, the central church of the Catholics of Lithuania and the Archdiocese of Vilnius, has for over thirty-five years, been used as an art gallery and concert hall. In preparation for the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia (sic), the Danylov Monastery in Moscow was returned to the Orthodox. We request that in commemoration of the 600-year jubilee of the Baptism of Lithuania, the central shrine of our county, the Cathedral of Vilnius, be returned.

1987, the Jubilee Year of the Baptism of Lithuania

Catholics of Lithuania from:

Rudamina - 214	Kupiškis - 938
Alksnėnai - 145	Ukmergė - 993
Aleksotas - 321	Utena - 1394
Prienai - 1773	Uliūnai - 102
Igliauka - 182	Pasvalys - 463
Patilčiai - 30	Biržai - 429
Kalvarija - 107	Vadokliai - 367
Šakiai - 824	Kalvainiai - 77
Liudvinavas - 270	Rosalimas - 75
Daukšiai - 158	Pakruojis - 370
Šiluva - 650	Anykščiai - 504
Pilviškiai - 285	Kėdainiai - 831
Sasnava - 129	Pumpėnai - 338
Lazdijai - 1015	Miežiškiai and Velykiai - 336
Kapsukas - 3201	Eišiškiai - 456
Kriokialaukis - 341	Ramygala - 218
Kazlų Rūda - 500	Smilgiai - 306

Various parishes- 1059	Rokiškis - 735
Veiveriai - 91	Krinčinas - 305
Skriaudžiai -102	Krekanava -184
Vilkaviškis -1372	Jurbarkas -184
Vilnius (St. Nicholas) - 1836	Jurbarkas - 463
Vilnius (Immaculate Conception) Žvėryne - 2257	
Kybartai - 1080	Naujamiestis - 384
Simnas - 968	Radviliškis - 550
Sasnavą - 222	Taujėnai - 259
Kalesninkai - 70	Šiauliai (St. George) -1814
Šiluva - 837	Šeduva - 592
Veisiejai - 546	Panevėžys (Cathedral) - 4168
Alytus II - 3759	

To: Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Kaunas and the Diocese of
Vilkaviškis, His Excellency, Liudas Povilonis
From: Faithful of the Kybartai Parish

A Petition

For the past five years, we, the people of Kybartai, in a way which rarely happens to a parish, experienced and suffered painfully many repressions from the government and the KGB.

On May 6, 1983, the pastor of our parish, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, was unjustly accused in Vilnius, and arrested. This was followed by interrogations of believers. The security police grilled about two hundred of the faithful of Kybartai, beginning with children and ending with illiterate grandparents. And not one of us was taken in by the promises of certified KGB agents or became trapped in the nets they spread. On the contrary, with the help of God, we stood the test in such a way that even the security agents themselves were surprised that they could not find "suitable" witnesses in the case of Father Sigitas Tamkevičius.

In this period so painful to our parish, we were greatly helped by Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, who was the associate pastor of our parish. For some time after the arrest of Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, at the direction of Your Excellency, he was our only spiritual leader. For that, we are eternally grateful to you and to him. For no one else at that painful period for the parish of Kybartai showed us such attention and spiritual support as this zealous priest, committed to his vocation. However, in 1984, the KGB arrested Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, together with his helper, Romas Žemaitis, for conscientiously carrying out his duties as a priest. On All Souls' Day, he visited the

cemetery in procession. His arrest was followed by a new wave of repression: searches, interrogations and threats.

Inspired by the example the sacrifices of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, we resolved and we tried within our capabilities, not to bend to falsehood and deceit, to remain faithful to spiritual values, and not to break under the heavy burden of the trials given us. We prayed God to strengthen us, and our suffering priests.

And this year, thanks to the democratization being carried out in our country, Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis was released. October 17, he was discharged from Chita Camp. We rejoiced and thanked God that this priest, whom we all respect, after having suffered so much, will finally be able to return to his homeland, Lithuania, and the earlier scene of his labors, the parish of Kybartai.

However, almost three months have gone by since the return of Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, but he still does not have a permanent place of work. Besides, we still hear the evil rumors of the atheists, vilifying not only Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis but also the bishops, saying that Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis is an imposter, without Holy Orders, or the necessary education.

Your Excellency, we turn to you, asking you to give your attention to the unusual difficulties which it has been and is the lot of the faithful of Kybartai to experience, and to appoint this zealous priest, Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, to our parish.

Respectfully and devotedly,
The faithful of Kybartai, signed by 801

To: Commissioner for the Council of Religious Affairs of Lithuania,
Petras Anilionis
From: The Faithful of the Kybartai Parish

A Petition

We, the faithful of the parish of Kybartai, in a petition signed by 800 believers, and the pastor, Father A. Sadauskas, appealed to our bishops. In our petition, we called the bishops' attention to the fact that almost three months have passed since Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis returned to Lithuania from the labor camp in Chita, rehabilitated by the government.

Based on the fact that until his arrest in 1984, Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis worked in the parish in Kybartai as associate pastor, and also knowing him as a zealous priest dedicated to his vocation, we requested the bishop to assign the aforesaid priest to the parish of Kybartai.

On January 10, 1988, a delegation of the faithful, empowered by the

parish, submitted a petition to His Excellency, Bishop Preikšas, and received the following verbal reply: "The bishops of Lithuania, regardless of the fact that Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis completed the correspondence course seminary, acknowledge him as a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. For this he has the requisite training and Holy Orders from a bishop. His ordination, like the ordination of those who have completed the Theological Seminary in Kaunas, or the correspondence course seminary, is valid, and no re-ordination is necessary. The sacrament of priesthood is conferred once and for all, and is irrevocable.

"As for the appointment of Father Matulionis as Associate Pastor of Kybartai, the bishops for their part have no objection."

However, in this case, you, Honorable Commissioner Anilionis, forbid the bishops to assign priests to parishes at their discretion - a right granted the bishops by the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

Honorable Commissioner, we ask you to explain on what basis you interfere with the Church? On what basis do you distinguish whose ordination to the priesthood is valid, and whose not? Finally, of what value are the resounding words constantly reprinted in the press: "The Church is separated from the state" and "The state does not interfere in the internal affairs of the Church", when reality demonstrates otherwise?

These facts are shameful and clearly witness how devoid of legal rights today is the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

Honorable Commissioner, we request that you immediately cease the discrimination against our honorable bishops. We the faithful respect and love our bishops and priests, so we cannot reconcile ourselves to a situation in which they are forced to be puppets of the Office of Religious Affairs.

We have defended and we will defend our Church, its bishops and priests. Therefore, if there is further interference in the internal affairs of the Church, and if priests who have completed the correspondence school seminary continue to be ignored, among them, our beloved Father Matulionis, we will seek recourse at higher levels, until the rights of believers guaranteed in the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. are actualized, and the theoretical becomes the real.

January 11, 1988

The Faithful of the Kybartai Parish

To: Minister of Defense of the U.S.S.R., Jazov

Copies to: The Procurator General of the U.S.S.R.

Commissar Vozgirdas of the Military Commissariat, Vilkaviškis,
L.S.S.R.

A Petition

On November 13, 1984, I was called up for compulsory military service in the Soviet Army. On November 12, 1984, when I reported to the Military Commissariat in Vilkaviškis, two civilians came up to me, right in the induction center, and demanded that I come with them. When I refused, they put handcuffs on me by force and, taking me from the induction center, declared that I was under arrest.

The Supreme Court of the L.S.S.R. sentenced me, together with Father Jonas-Kaštytis Matulionis, to two years incarceration under Par. 199, 3d, and Par. 201 of the Lithuanian S.S.R. Criminal Code. They accused me of organizing a religious parade, and actively participating in it, as well as resisting an official. I am not guilty of any of the accusations, because:

1. There was no religious parade at all. On November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints, it was not a parade to the cemetery but a devotional procession, clearly indicated in the *Ritual* of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. No one organizes church ceremonies, including processions. These are not your April or October demonstrations to which it is necessary to herd people with the help of attractive prizes, promises, and threats. Believers go to routine services and to religious solemnities of their own free will, and everyone, beginning with the priest and ending with the smallest believer, knows his place in church and what he is supposed to do during services. No special organization is needed for this, at all. So how could I, an ordinary believer, just eighteen years old, "organize a parade to the cemetery"?

3. I was accused of resisting an official simply because I blocked Chairman Gudžiūnas of the Kybartai City Executive Committee, when he tried to interfere with the priest performing religious services. In this case, it was Executive Committee Chairman Gudžiūnas who was legally in the wrong, since he had no right to interrupt the priest during religious services, all the more since I used no physical force against the official, nor any offensive language. In such a case, it is the duty of any decent individual, especially a believer, to defend a priest.

In this case, it was I who defended the priest and not someone else because, during the religious services, I was standing nearest to Father Matulionis.

After I finished the two-year prison sentence unjustly meted out to me, I was once again urged on June 9 to report for military service in the Soviet Army. At the appointed time, I arrived at the Military Commissariat in Vilnius where I declared that I would serve in the army, but would not take the oath. For refusing to take the military oath, the staff of the Vilkaviškis City Military Commissariat terrorized me in all sorts of ways, threatening to ship me out to the "polar bears", where life would be more difficult than in camp. One staff member of the Vilkaviškis City Military Commissariat stated outright that those such as I should be shot.

From the Vilkaviškis Military Commissariat they took me to Vilnius. Here, about thirty individuals in mufti and in uniform assembled, and tried for several hours to convince me that I was obliged to take the military oath, since otherwise, I would be criminally liable. When I categorically refused to take the oath, I was released. They did not take me into the army.

On December 6, 1987, I was called up for military service. Once again, I had to undergo the same lectures and terrorizing. Once more, from Vilnius I was returned home. They did not take me into the army. Once again, I had to seek employment and take care of my documents.

On March 25, 1988, I again received an order to report to the Vilkaviškis City Military Commissariat. This time, when I went to the Military Commissariat, I declared that I refused to serve in the Soviet Army. I was led to make this decision by the following circumstances:

1. At this time throughout the Soviet Union, the processes of restructuring and democratization are taking place, but they do not touch the faithful of Lithuania:

a. To date, churches confiscated from the faithful have not been returned (Queen of Peace in Klaipėda, the Cathedral in Vilnius, etc.).

b. Political prisoners are still being held in the Soviet camps (Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius, Balys Gajauskas, Petras Gražulis, et.al.).

c. Prisoners of conscience who have completed their sentences in Soviet camps continue to be terrorized by KGB agents. (Father Jonas-Kastytis Matulionis is not allowed to function officially as a priest. Procurators' Offices and Military Commissariats are pulling me back and forth, terrorizing me, threatening me, etc.)

d. Prisoner of conscience Petras Gražulis was beaten by militia officers in the courtroom before my eyes.

2. A disarray prevails in the Soviet Army, as a result of which innocent people often die needlessly. In November, 1987, a good friend of mine, Ričardas Griškaitis, was brought home from Alma-Ata in a metal casket. They accused this lively, deeply believing young man who perished serving in the Soviet Army in mysterious circumstances, of hanging himself. Oh, the circumstances connected with this case clearly testify that this is absurd. Moreover, I was summoned to the Vilkaviškis City Military Commissariat where Major Spritzin warned me not to make any speeches, either at the grave of the deceased Ričardas Griškaitis, nor in church; otherwise I and those near and dear to Griškaitis would experience unpleasantness. Is this not persecution of believers?

Protesting against these negative incidents, I categorically refuse to serve in the Soviet Army until such time as the process of restructuring and democratization reaches the religious believers of Lithuania. I demand that all

prisoners of conscience be rehabilitated publicly, in the press, and this, not sometime sixty years from now after they are dead, as is being done with some victims of the cult of Stalin, but right now, today!

April 4, 1988
Romas Žemaitis

SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS

At the beginning of February 1988, at the direction of the Republic Procurator, the following persons were warned at local procurators' offices:

Father Antanas Šeškevičius (Associate Pastor of Gargždai parish)
Father Vincas Vėlavičius (Telšiai Cathedral Mass-priest)
Genovaitė Kriščiūnaitė (Alytus II parish organist)
Veronika Beišytė (Kapsukas)
Kryževičius Family (Kaunas)
Monika Gavėnaitė (Šiluva)
Sigitas Gudaitis (Prienai)

It was emphasized to them that if they signed petitions similar to those addressed to people of good-will world-wide, they would be penalized in accord with *Criminal Code*, Par. 68.

K a p s u k a s

On February 2, 1988, at the end of Petras Gražulis' trial, the following were crudely and unjustly detained by the KGB:

Vincas Danielius (Šiauliai)
Gintas Sakavičius (Kapčiamiestis)
Rimantas Matulaitis (Kapsukas)
Bronė Valaitytė (Sasna).

Inspector Stripinaitis of the Criminal Subsection used physical force on those detained. Together with other militia officers, he cursed them. Judge Rudzhensko, having found them guilty of violating Par. 187 of the *Code of Administrative Law* (failing to carry out the directives of a duly constituted official — hooliganism), sentenced them to fifteen days. The guards were stern but just, while higher militia officers ridiculed them and Commandant Major Avietynas often used to come in intoxicated.

On February 3, Matulaitis was summoned and interrogated by a KGB agent who would not give his name. The chekist was interested in knowing what Vincas Danielius talked about with Matulaitis and Sakavičius.

On February 10, Danielius was interrogated. The chekist would not

give his name, promising to introduce himself later since, according to him, that was not to be the last interrogation of Danielius. The KGB agent was interested in knowing Danielius' opinion of Petras Gražulis's refusal to report for military training, and whether he intended to enter the seminary. He declared that because of the jail sentence, Danielius would have a lot of trouble enrolling in the seminary. He asked how Danielius was preparing to commemorate February 16 (Lithuanian Independence Day - Trans. Note). Finally, he advised him to reconsider his behavior, to form the appropriate conclusions, and while it was still not too late, to mend his ways.

On February 17, the detainees were released. Waiting for them at the Kapsukas Department of Internal Affairs, with flowers, was a small group of about twenty like-minded individuals.

After praying in the church in Kapsukas, they visited the cemetery where they placed flowers on the graves of soldiers who had perished for Lithuanian freedom.

Š i a u l i a i

In the middle of the month of February 1988, Senior Stage Technician Stanislovas Kazokaitis and Lighting Technician Domas Kančiauskas, were summoned to the office of the Director of the Šiauliai Drama Theater for interrogation.

The questions during the interrogation concerned Vincas Danielius, a resident of Šiauliai, Kauno 34-1. Chekist Kanapė was interested in finding out how Danielius was employed (at the Šiauliai Theater, Danielius worked as a graphic artist), whether he had broken any rules, what his political views were, whether he participated in the August 23 demonstration in Vilnius, and whether he noticed any anti-Soviet or religious literature at home.

The chekist asked Danielius to be warned that the latter should change his views, since otherwise he could experience great unpleasantness and even wind up in the prisoners' dock.

On April 14, auto base driver Arūnas Zembleckis was summoned to the Office of the Director of the Šiauliai Column of the Lithuanian Ministry of Communications Auto Base. The KGB agent who interrogated him would not give his name. The agent tried to recruit Zembleckis as a KGB agent, to report with whom and about what Danielius speaks and what he is interested in. He demanded that this interview remain secret. Zembleckis did not promise and refused to cooperate with the KGB.

OUR PRISONERS

Father Sigitas Tamkevičius writes:

"... Working at the loom, all day long I can meditate, pray, and make

the Way of the Cross. Such has been my Lent, and my retreat. After work, I don't feel like doing anything, or reading. And so it goes, day after day. Meditating on Christ's Way of the Cross, in prayer I remember all the Veronicas and Simons of Cyrene who, one way or another, have been with me in prayer or by letter. By their idealism and solidarity, many have wiped away the sweat of my brow and many have lightened my burden. The assistance of some, I saw with my own eyes. About others, I knew. And still others, I unerringly felt next to me. God, how good it is to be alive when one sees alongside oneself, or at least senses, so many good people and loving hearts. These people are the targets of the world's hatred, enmity, and suspicion. So to all the Veronicas and all the Simons of Cyrene, a thousand thanks!

"Not long ago, we all saw over Central Television, the film about Father Alfonsas Svarinskas. Looking on was the film's principle hero. Afterwards, our commentaries and congratulations followed. It appears that in any mirror, it is possible to recognize a good priest's face — of course, if only one's vision has not weakened too much.

"In the newspapers, I read many articles about priests. More and more men of ideals and sacrifice finish the seminary, and not a single hireling, not a single tax-collector, concerned only for his own welfare. What a great responsibility priests have for the welfare of the people of God! The Redeemer could possibly reproach more than one: 'Could you not watch with me for one hour?' (See Mt 14, 37)

"Only people who sacrifice can show and lead the way! Man today turns away in derision from those leaders who speak one way and live another. A priest by his life must glow like the sun. Otherwise, woe to him!

"I await Easter. The footsteps of Spring are already heard, and in the hills of the Urals, the sun is brighter and the wind gentler. When you receive this letter, it will most likely be Palm Sunday, or perhaps Easter. I greet everyone gathered at the empty tomb of Christ! He is not here! He is arisen! Alleluia!

"But for this reason, He is in us and with us, and not only when we pray in our room and suffer pain, but also when, uneasy on account of our own foolishness, we flee the Cross of Christ. He is always with us. Therefore at all times - Alleluia!

"I wish everyone pure Easterjoy! To everyone who has known and confided in the Lord's love, I extend my hand and I remind them of the words of the Beloved Disciple of Jesus, 'Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world'. (Un 5,4)

"Everyone who celebrates the feast of the conquerer is himself a herald and bearer of the Lord's victory."

March 8, 1988

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas writes:

"... I greet you warmly, and through you, all parishioners, friends, and acquaintances dear to my heart. May the Lord God keep you, may His grace lead you all to new heights of holiness.

"I rejoice that you received all my letters last year, but I received barely a third of yours.

"I think that you're only partly right in saying, 'You don't hear any good news, but only bad news...' Isn't it pleasant that several newspapers have devoted space to me in their pages, and that a film about me has been shown in theaters and over Moscow and Vilnius television. Moscow Television charges 362 rubles a minute. What a sum for a half-hour!

"Of course, there is much falsehood in it (for example, that I freely agreed to be filmed, etc.), but is that so important? They've publicized me throughout the Soviet Union. My friends have been congratulating me. At this time, I could win the elections. But just now, I don't need any of that! I'm a priest exclusively! And I'll remain a priest! It remains only to repeat with the saint, 'Not to me, Lord, not to me, but only to Your name give glory!'

"We need just one thing: always and everywhere to do the Will of God, which is Holy and undisputable. I have tried and I will try to do God's Will all my life, devotedly and with a smile in my heart and on my lips, since as Saint Luke says, 'God loves a cheerful giver!'

"Don't be surprised at my new address. It's all the same to me. My final address is heaven. This is the address not to lose and not to forget. They removed all of the Christmas wafers from your letters and from others, and threw them in the trash. Nothing is sacred to them. There is almost no sign of restructuring here!

"... I regret that it's impossible to answer everyone's letters. I think that everyone understands my situation well, will forgive me, and continue to write.

"I'm grateful to my brother priests for remembering me, and the Mass every month in Viduklė. And today, you'll be praying in the homeland, while I do here, together with Father Sigitas. Our thoughts are free; no one can restrain them or trammel them. I thank everyone, everyone, who remembers me in prayer, in speech or by letter.

"I'm glad that I can confess in Lithuanian now, and have some companionship. How many times I asked them to make it possible for me to get to confession, but always in vain. God has taken care of it in such a way that I don't owe anyone anything. Wondrous are the ways of the Lord!

"Lately, my health has deteriorated somewhat: my spine hurts, and my blood pressure is elevated. Illness would keep me from working or lifting anything heavy, but reality demands it. I received a release from work for four days. I'll be able to rest and get some sleep, and afterwards, we'll see. I did not return to the kitchen since there it's necessary to work twelve hours and to lift 40-50

liter pots.

"I'm going to try to improve my health, but the possibilities here are less than limited. Once again, may His holy Will be done!

"I look through the Lithuanian newspapers. Especially interesting was the last plenary meeting of the Party. It appears that there is no basis for praise. It's too bad that the moral outlook is not improving. The newspapers say that bootlegging has spread. Moreover, the name of Lithuania is often mentioned in connection with drug smuggling. So after all this, can we really speak about success or culture?

"It's too bad that I have been transported far from Lithuania and cannot join actively in the struggle for a brighter future for the country. Let our brothers not slumber and struggle against this evil with all the means at their disposal, otherwise history and God will condemn us. How terrible it is to die without leaving the stamp of one's humanity.

"Working in the kitchen, I had very little free time, so I barely managed to read the newspapers. Never mind any kind of serious work or self-education. So I have fallen well behind in my program. The condition of my health constantly reminds me it is necessary only to learn the language of holiness. It alone is a guarantee of a happy eternity.

"In general, I am completely at peace and happy with the direction of my life; I do what I can and everything else I leave to heaven. If there is a possibility, I will work in the service of the altar. If not - God will not blame me. I have provided myself with everything. Thank God, I'm not hungry. In spirit, I am completely free, not forgotten, and loved by my friends.

"Everyday, I watch television for about a half-hour for domestic and foreign news, so I am informed at least for my own needs.

"I am spending Lent peacefully. January and February were moderately eventful months. Every day, I would sing songs and hymns.

"Now it is Lent. Each day, I meditate on the Passion of Christ: Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, I go in spirit with the people from Viduklė to the Kalnai (a popular pilgrimage site - Trans. Note). I keep asking God all the time that Viduklė not get tired on the road to God.

"On Sundays and holydays, my soul is in Lithuania, and especially in the parishes where I worked. Those days are especially difficult for me. But once more, I offer this sacrifice for my personal sins and those of my nation.

"It would be good if one of the priests wrote to me about the liturgical changes. They thought they would publish all ten volumes by 1985, i.e., in ten years. But now, I read somewhere that they had published only four. Why? What was done in Lithuania in honor of the Blessed Archbishop Jurgis, and what does the *Code of Canon Law* allow to be done?

"In closing, I again greet everyone sincerely."

February 26, 1988

From a letter of Gintautas Iešmantas:

"... Seven years ago, during my defense statement at my trial, I expressed the idea that I would be happy if my steps would provide hope to at least some people, and show them the way. At that time, in a poem I read which I composed in the dungeons of the KGB, I expressed the hope:

*"We have sacrificed everything for you, O Freedom:
Tranquility, love, success, desires,
Our family pleasures we have spread beneath your feet,
We dedicated boldness, longing dreams.
Not terrible to our hearts appeared the dangers,
With which you sign our steps at war.
You are our star, our hope and our redemption.
If only our hearts would flame with longing!...*

"I see that our waiting and hopes were not in vain, the best news is that young hearts are responding. After all, the hope and future of our country is our youth. The ice floes will move only when those setting out on the road of life see Truth become fired up with desire for truth and freedom, find the strength and reason to renounce material goods and profit, and dare to sacrifice themselves for a high and noble purpose.

"There is no need to apologize for seeing your way late. It is never too late. My journey to light and Resolve was somewhat longer and more complex. You saw the star just in time, in your youth, when everything still lies before one. However, this is not enough. It is necessary also to trust the Truth found so that you can climb the scaffold for it with light heart. Without wavering or doubt. But this is possible only when you are sure that that truth is the real Truth, and it alone must become the essence and deciding factor in human existence.

"When one does not have firm convictions, one often looks to others. It is not independent. And seeing that there is nothing to depend on, becomes confused, disillusioned and even broken. In camp, I met such people...

*"You set forth on a road,
where there is nothing to distract you.
You remain a support to yourself,
when in the storm it seems
Towers crumble, icefloes split.
Glowing with victory in the battle,
you are obliged to help others understand.
Are not the proud oaks a source of strength to us?
You were nothing. Today you have to exceed yourself,
forgetting it was late.
You have been able to throw off your dream
with a flight of fancy.*

*Even in darkness, remember there is light.
You are the continuation of its restlessness.*

"See what a task is waiting! We are in a situation where only we can help ourselves. Compromises cause damage, not easily reparable, to the goal which we are seeking."

December 28, 1987

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

Kaišiadorys

On January 17, 1988, in the Cathedral of Telšiai, His Excellency, Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, having read the lesson and Gospel designated for the Sunday, addressed the faithful, saying that it is necessary to love truth and if need be, to defend it from lies and calumny. The bishop said that he felt an obligation to respond to an article concerning him by correspondent A. Chaikovsky, published January 12, 1988, in *Tiesa*. The article is called, "The *Chronicle* is Based on Calumnies".

"What is written in this article concerning me," the bishop said, "is a pure lie. The only truth is that I was prepared that day to go out when two strangers called on me and introduced themselves as correspondents of *Tiesa*."

The bishop received them as he does all callers on business. The strangers were officious and aloof, the tone of their questions, almost aggressive. The first question: "Why do you refuse to publish a Catholic newspaper?"

The bishop replied briefly, "We refuse because it is obvious to everyone that the newspaper will not be the kind Catholics need. We need a newspaper similar in content to the kind which Catholic dioceses publish, for example, in the German Democratic Republic."

The second question: "Do you read the *Chronicle*?"

The bishop responded, "Not now."

To the question, "Did you read it earlier? What do you think of it?", the bishop explained that the *Chronicle* is a necessary publication since it raises difficulties which the Church in Lithuania and the faithful, victims of discrimination and of attacks by the atheists and officials, encounter.

Here the bishop gave the reporters an example, in connection with his mother's funeral. While the bishop was in internal exile, his mother died. The mother wished to be interred in her native parish of Žasliai. When application was made to the local government asking for a truck to take the casket with the mother's remains to Žasliai, government officials sarcastically retorted, "Let his mother rot here..."

Having listened to the bishop's account with frowns on their faces, the



Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, created Cardinal in May 1988.

reporters put a third question: "What do you think of Father Rokas Puzonas?"

The bishop replied that Father Rokas Puzonas is a good, exemplary priest. Such is the opinion of all the priests.

There were no further questions. Bishop Sladkevičius did not speak either about his youth, nor about the fact that he lacked the wherewithal to bury his mother and asked the assistance of the chairman of the communal farm, nor about sports... Nor about the "improvement" of life, nor about the fact that the *Chronicle* is causing distrust among priests and that the bishop does not agree with "attacks on the government", that the renunciation of an "official publication" had been hasty, and that he had warned Father Rokas Puzonas...

Conclusion: If *Tiesa*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania, dares to lie so brazenly about Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius, it is not difficult to understand how little truth there is in that same article by reporter Chaikovsky, which was carried for three issues of *Tiesa*.

Š a k i a i

On January 19, 1988, the priests of the *rayon* were summoned to the Šakiai *Rayon* Executive Committee. The Vice Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Juozėnas, came to meet with the priests. He informed the priests that plans



Msgr. Juozapas Žemaitis, Dean of Sakiai.

are about to issue new *Regulations for Religious Associations*, in which, according to him, the requirements of the Church would be considered. At this point, he stated: "As long as the new *Regulations* have not been confirmed, it is necessary to adhere strictly to the old."

When the Pastor of Lukšiai, Father Lioginas Kunevičius, asked whether the *new Regulations for Religious Associations* would be submitted for public consideration, and whether the clergy would be able to make comments, Juozėnas replied, "The religious people in our country are a minority, so there is no sense in submitting the *Regulations* for public discussion."

The Dean of Sakiai, Msgr. Juozapas Žemaitis, tried to ascertain why the Soviet government suppressed all the religious orders which had been operating at the time in Lithuania. The Vice Commissioner for Religious Af-

fairs, Juozėnas, replied that he did not know *why this was done!* (True, lately in the press from time to time, brief news items appear with the idea that some of their houses, for example, in Liškiava, be returned. Incidentally, the religious orders' sphere of activity is strictly outlined here. Besides strict control by the government atheists, these would become appendages to the collective farms, growing vegetables; and no matter how paradoxical, the government would "allow" them to nurse one or the other ailing old person.)

At the end of the meeting, as a gesture of "friendship and cooperation", an offer was again made to the priests to take advantage of the excursion being specially organized to a communal pig farm. The priests categorically refused the excursion.

G a r g ž d a i (Klaipėda *Rayon*)

At the beginning of February 1988, the priests of the *Rayon* were summoned to the Klaipėda *Rayon* Executive Committee for a meeting with government officials. Executive Committee Vice Chairman V. Leita read the priests a lecture prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, in which, based on records of interrogations during the Stalin era, Bishops Vincentas Borisevičius and Pranciškus Ramanauskas of Telšiai are insulted and called "helpers of the bandits". During the lecture, Father Jonas Pakalniškis, Pastor of the parish of Laukuva, and Father Jonas Kauneckas, Pastor of Skaudvilė, were accused of delivering "politically ambiguous" sermons.

After the lecture, Father Juozapas Janauskas reminded everyone that Bishop Ramanauskas was constantly demeaned in Soviet labor camp, and worked as a priwy janitor. Birutė Kalendrienė, Director of the *Rayon* Division of Agitation and Propaganda retorted, "Such a bandit deserved it!"

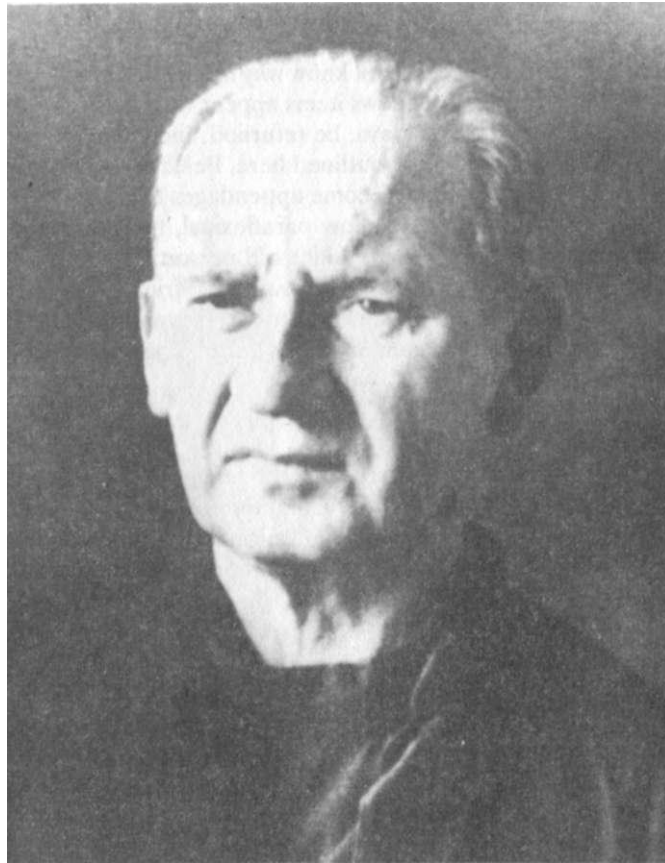
Father Antanas Šeškevičius, Associate Pastor of the Parish of Gargždai, noted, not without reason, "The lecture shows that Stalinism is returning to Lithuania."

During the meeting with government representatives, the priests were warned not to pray for Lithuania in church on February 16.

A l y t u s

On February 4, 1988, the priests of the City and *Rayon* of Alytus were summoned to the *Rayon* Executive Committee for a "talk". Participating in the talk was First Secretary Rybakov of the city's Party Committee, and Vice Chairman Makštutis. Also participating was the editor of the *Rayon* newspaper, the director of the Department of Finances, Second Party Secretary Aleksandravičius, a city architect, several deputies and even the *Rayon* procurator.

The basic reason for the priests' gathering was to warn them sternly not to try to arrange any church commemorations on the occasion of February 16.



Bishop Ramanauskas upon his return from Siberia in 1956.

The officials demanded that on February 14-16, no services be organized in the churches to commemorate the anniversary of the independence of Lithuania. "Otherwise," warned Alytus Party Committee First Secretary Rybakov, "we have the right to close the churches if they are used for other than religious purposes."

In his report, Alytus *Rayon* Executive Committee Chairman Antanavičius quoted *Canon Law* regarding what a priest may do, what he is forbidden, and obviously, commented on everything in his own way.

The deceased bishops of the Lowlanders, Borisevičius and Ramanauskas, were recalled bitterly, as organizers and helpers of those who resisted the Soviet government after the war. Nor were the Bishops of the Diocese of Vilkaviškis, Skvireckas and Brizgys, overlooked.

It was their fault, the government officials brazenly lied, that during and after the war, Lithuania lost about five hundred priests. Some of them, who were against the Soviet government when it came in in 1940, had to flee to the West. Others, who cooperated with the post-war resistance, were isolated from the public.

For purposes of illustration, confessions which had been obtained during interrogations were resurrected from the archives, even though during the so-called restructuring, even the official press reports widely the manner in which confessions were obtained during Stalin-era, how Stalin put even his most loyal generals in the prisoners' dock, and how his henchmen "legally" took care of those condemned.

Father Vytautas Gustaitis indicated Father Antanas Mioldažys as a victim of the Stalinist terror, and suggested that he be asked how he got ten years in prison for an alleged crime against the Soviet government.

Father Rumšas was faulted for the "non-religious content" of his sermons. Father Pranas Račiūnas was required not to allow the illegal priests, Ričardas Repšys and Jonas Boruta, to work in his parish. In the words of Executive Committee Vice Chairman Makštutis, no priest without a certificate issued by Petras Anilionis has the right to work in any parish.

Vice Chairman Laukienė, of the Alytus *Rayon* Executive Committee, submitted examples showing that not all priests abide by government regulations. Some of them preach unsuitably, like the pastor of the parish of Kiaukliai, Rokas Puzonas, Antanas and Kazimieras Gražulis, as well as Jonas Kauneckas; others erect crosses and statues in the churchyard without asking permission, like Father Vytautas Insoda, and the Pastor of Butrimonys, Edvardas Kraujalis, while Father Vaclovas Stakėnas holds a Christmas party for children at an unsuitable time.

This time, not a single priest mentioned in the report kept silent. And when the City Executive Committee Chairman Janušauskienė began showing a model of new *rayons* being erected, the priests asked where the new church would be erected. Party Second Secretary Aleksandravičius tried to assure them, "If it is needed, there will be a church also..." With this, the meeting ended.

P a s v a l y s

At the beginning of February 1988, priests working in the *rayon* were summoned to the Pasvalys Executive Committee. At the beginning of the meeting, the Executive Committee Chairman told the priests about the economic attainments of the republic, and at the end of his talk, he began to warn that there be no prayers for Lithuania in the churches February 16. This would be an anti-Soviet excess, just like the placing of flowers at the graves and monuments of freedom-fighters.

The Associate Pastor of Pasvalys, Father Algimantas Petkunas, ex-

plained to the chairman that this year, Soviet officials with their various interdicts, had publicized February 16 as never before. As for praying for one's country in church, the law not only did not forbid it, but even required it.

On February 16, in Pasvalys, people placed flowers at the monument of Petras Vileišis, signer of the *Declaration of Independence*.

Šilutė

On February 1, 1988, priests and Lutheran pastors of the *Rayon* were summoned to the Šilutė *Rayon* Executive Committee. The Chairman of the Executive Committee read the clergy a lecture sent by Commissioner for Religious Affairs Petras Anilionis, in which, quoting the records of Stalin-era interrogations, an attempt was made to denigrate Bishops Vincentas Borisevičius and Pranciškus Ramanauskas.

Father Zenonas Degutis asked that lecturers in the future not give such talks, because today everyone knows, even from official sources, how "statements" were obtained in the days of Stalin.

The *Rayon* Executive Committee Chairman warned the priests that on February 16, there be no commemoration of the holiday in churches. The priests replied, "Independent Lithuania is a historical fact, and its commemoration cannot be considered either a calumny or an anti-Soviet excess."

Prienai

In the middle of March 1988, members of *rayon* parish committees were summoned to Prienai for a meeting with Religious Affairs Commissioner Petras Anilionis. In the beginning, those assembled were shown the film, *Catholics in the Soviet Union*, which Religious Affairs Commissioner Anilionis later commented on himself.

The Commissioner tried to show that in the Soviet Union, there is wonderful freedom of religion. The faithful asked if there is such wonderful freedom, then why are there priests in prison? Anilionis explained that the priests themselves did not wish to leave prison. "Even if they threw them and all their junk out of prison, they themselves would bring it right back!"

Allegedly, in prison they are more useful to foreign reactionaries.

To the question why there are so many churches closed in Lithuania, the Commissioner replied that, "Only those were closed in which bandits concealed weapons."

In his speech, Anilionis ridiculed Bishop Vincentas Sladkevičius of Kaišiadorys, accusing him of disregarding the Soviet government and not attending meetings with government representatives. "The Soviet government will not pay attention to such bishops," the Commissioner tried to frighten his listeners.

The Commissioner was not comforted by the fact that in Lithuania,

according to him, there are many unmarried women masquerading as nuns. "They try to obtain employment at churches, and then drag the priests into anti-Soviet activities," Anilionis said, offering as an example Nijolė Sadūnaitė, the laundress at the parish of Paberžė, and the organist at Žarėnai-Latveliai, Regina Teresiūtė.

The Commissioner demanded that church committees not hire such as those mentioned, but would hire little old ladies locally for work in church. It is Anilionis's conviction that local little old ladies are more suitable for this.

Tauragė

On March 21, 1988, members of *rayon* parish committees were summoned to the motion picture theater in Tauragė for a meeting with Religious Affairs Commissioner, Petras Anilionis. At the beginning of the meeting, a film, *Catholics in the Soviet Union*, was shown. Anilionis, commenting on the film shown, tried to convince his listeners, "Although religion is incompatible with Communist morality, freedom of worship is fully guaranteed to believers in the Soviet Union."

Only it is too bad that priests, called extremists by the Commissioner, abuse that freedom. As an example, he mentioned three sermons given by Father Jonas Kauneckas during a religious festival of Mary at the Calvary of the Lowlanders in 1987, in which, according to Anilionis, the priest said nothing about Mary, but simply incited the faithful not to accept Communist ideology.

"Such priests will not be allowed to give sermons at the Calvary of the Lowlanders during other big festivals. And if Father Kauneckas does not stop giving such sermons, the church of Skaudvilė will be closed. The parish council of Skaudvilė should reprove Father Kauneckas, and not allow him to give anti-Soviet sermons," Anilionis argued.

One of the women in the auditorium asked the speaker, "If there is so much religious freedom, then why are teachers not allowed to go to church openly and to participate in services?"

"Aren't you being too zealous? If you wish to know, go and inquire at the Department of Education," the annoyed Commissioner shot back.

Similar answers were given to all the questions submitted by the faithful.

Šiauliai

On March 24, 1988, the members of the committees of twenty of city and *rayon* religious associations were summoned to the Offices of the Šiauliai City Executive Committee.

Participating in the meeting was Vice Commissioner Juozėnas of the Council for Religious Affairs, Šiauliai City Executive Committee Vice Chairman Gaurilėikienė, and the Šiauliai *Rayon* Executive Committee Vice Chair-

man. Vice Commissioner Juozėnas expressed annoyance because in Lithuania, priests are showing up who, in his words, use the Church for political purposes.

As an example, he used the churches of St. Ann and St. Nicholas in Vilnius, and St. George in Šiauliai. Juozėnas particularly condemned the Voice of America and other programs for announcing in advance of February 16 in which churches and at what times there would be services for the homeland. He faulted Father Kazimieras Gražulis, Associate Pastor of the Church of St. George in the City of Šiauliai, of conducting services for Lithuania and for the sermons which were delivered on that occasion.

"You are the real overseers of the Church," Juozėnas told the church committee members, "and you are obliged to see everything and know everything which takes place in your churches. Do not think that we cannot, or do not have the right, of putting priests like Gražulis in prison; we have, but we are waiting for them to straighten out. We know how to take care of disobedient priests," Juozėnas explained. "You yourselves know what happened to Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius. Now they can do nothing!"

Vice Commissioner Juozėnas demanded that committee members keep track of the priests, watching how they spend money, and he emphasized that the necessary sum must be allotted to the Peace Fund.

After the main presentation, questions were taken. J. Šileikis asked, "Surely, we Lithuanians are not forbidden to love our homeland and to pray for it?"

Not receiving a reply, Šileikis continued, "February 16, after participating in services for the country, we carried flowers to the graves of veterans who died in the wars of independence. At the seminary, about 20 KGB agents were on guard, photographing everyone who came to the cemetery. After placing our flowers and praying, we dispersed.

"But what did the Soviet press report? There was a plethora of libelous articles concerning visitors to the cemetery February 16. Lithuania is a Catholic country, the Land of Crosses. Down through the centuries, it has been oppressed by one or the other occupant, but always the churches operated and no one demolished crosses. But when the Soviets came in, many churches were turned into warehouses and concert halls, priests were arrested en masse, and many artistic crosses were vandalized. So in connection with restructuring, perhaps it now possible to begin restoring the crosses which were destroyed. Is it permitted to erect a cross in one's own yard?" asked Šileikis.

The reply was negative. When someone from the auditorium asked if a religious newspaper or magazine would some day be published, Juozėnas replied very vaguely, explaining that quite a bit of time could go by before they were allowed to have a newspaper.

To the question whether the Cathedral of Vilnius would be returned, and whether churches might be erected in the new cities such as Naujoji Akmenė

and Elektrėnai, Juozėnas replied in the negative.

Asked when Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius of the Archdiocese of Vilnius would finally be able to resume his See and carry out his pastoral functions without interference, Vice Commissioner Juozėnas tried to explain that the government is deciding this question, and that he himself had gone to see Bishop Steponavičius. But the whole problem was that the bishop refuses to change his attitude. At that point, the conversation broke off, Juozėnas explained. Then and there, he expressed the hope that His Excellency, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, would soon have to give up his direct duties because of old age, and then, the affairs of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, in his opinion, would take a turn for the better.

"After consultation with the bishops, one of them should be sent to Vilnius, and this question would be solved," Vice Commissioner Juozėnas of the Council for Religious Affairs ended his talk.

Alytus

On September 10, 1987, the Alytus *Rayon* newspaper *Communist Tomorrow* printed an article by S. Kamarauskas, entitled, "Why Does Father Antanas Gražulis Sow Lies?"

In the article, Father Gražulis is accused of violating Soviet law, and of inciting anti-Soviet attitudes. The aforesaid article evoked resentment among the faithful of Alytus.

On September 19, they sent a letter to editors of the *Rayon* newspaper, *Communist Tomorrow*. In the letter, they wrote,

"... You write that Father Gražulis breaks Soviet law. Why did you not give specific examples? Where, when and what laws did he break? Is the proclaiming of truth in public a denigration of one's life?

"We the faithful of the parish of Alytus know Father Gražulis as a good and exemplary priest. We never heard him practicing demagogery in his sermons, or ridiculing material progress; on the contrary, Father urges people to make a better life, but just not to forget that all man possesses is just a means of reaching eternity.

"We agree when Father Gražulis advises parents not to allow their children to join atheistic organizations. Do atheists advise their children to go to church and to pray each day?

"We, the faithful, demand that the editor recall the aforesaid article," the people of Alytus end their statement. The letter was signed by 1609 of the faithful.

The December 3-9, 1987 issue of the newspaper *Gimtasis kraštas (Native Land)* published an item called, "Concerning the Incident in Rokiškis." A completely analogical incident took place in the cemetery of Alytus. After the announcement was made October 25 in the church in Alytus II, concerning the



A 1985 procession in the parish of Alytus II.

All Souls' commemoration, and its hour which, incidentally, did not conflict with the civil government's ceremony, and so could not interfere with anybody, the priests were repeatedly summoned to the *Rayon* Executive Committee, there having "consulted" with officials, to receive the appropriate permit.

When the Associate Pastor, Father Antanas Gražulis, explained that according to the *Regulations for Religious Associations*, no special permit was needed for ceremonies in the cemetery, the Director of the Financial Section began visiting the rectory with a group of female staff members. At the time, he was substituting for the City Executive Committee Vice Chairman, A. Makštutis.

The Director of the Financial Section did not conceal his anger when he failed several times to find Father Gražulis at home. In various city organiza-

tions, word was passed along that the priests were doing something illegal.

On November 1, when the priests and faithful arrived at the cemetery, loud music was being played over amplifiers, and only after repeated requests by a priest and faithful, it was turned down. A large group of militia and security police were summoned to the cemetery where they demonstratively photographed the participants in the ceremonies, and the priests. When the procession had gone some distance from the main gates, the music was turned on again at full volume.

After All Souls', Executive Committee Vice Chairman Makštutis tried by telephone to summon Father Gražulis to the Executive Committee to explain himself regarding the "transgression" which had been perpetrated. Makštutis alleged that a procession was organized in the cemetery (a cross and two mourning banners were carried as required by the *Funeral Missal* published with government permission), but for processions, a permit from the Executive Committee is necessary.

Father Gražulis, having explained that the *Regulations for Religious Associations* require no special permission of government officials for religious ceremonies in the church, churchyard, or cemetery, and make no exceptions for processions, refused to go for a routine government scare.

So the situation is the same as that in Rokiškis, only in Alytus, no one apologized to the priests and none of the government officials was disciplined for interfering with religious ceremonies.

It is stranger still that even the official publication of the republic, *Tiesa*, joined in this demand by local officials to cancel religious services in the cemetery. On the eve of November 1, it reprinted from the Alytus *Rayon* newspaper, *Communist Tomorrow*, an article by S. Kamarauskas, entitled, "Why Does Father Antanas Gražulis Sow Lies?", the groundlessness of which 1,609 faithful of the parish of Alytus II testified to in their petition to agencies.

Š i l u v a

This is the eighth year that on the thirteenth of each month, the faithful assembled at the shrine of Šiluva from all over Lithuania, praying to Mary and asking her intercession. February 13, 1988, was special. A group of priests and laity, in a special announcement which was carried even over foreign radio, urged the faithful at the Shrine of Šiluva to pray for Lithuania, commemorating the seventieth anniversary of Lithuanian Independence.

The Vilnius and *Rayon* KGB warned the priests of Šiluva in advance, and sternly demanded that there "not be any kind of excesses".

On February 12, the drivers of buses in operation informed passengers that from noon February 12, until after noon February 13, neither buses nor taxis would be travelling to Šiluva. And so for a whole day, not a single bus travelled to Šiluva. Private automobiles were not prevented from driving to

Šiluva, travellers who had purchased advanced tickets had their money refunded.

On February 13, the roads to Šiluva were full of pedestrians. For the principal Mass, the church was already full of the faithful, with about 2,000 worshippers assembled. Five priests concelebrated Mass, and about 1,200 of the faithful received Holy Communion.

After the solemn services - adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament - the whole church sang the national anthem. Leaving church, the worshippers praying the rosary went in orderly ranks toward the chapel. In the chapel, Mass was offered for Lithuania, and a sermon on the theme of the jubilee was preached. After services, the national anthem and "*Lietuva brangi*" ("Beloved Lithuania"), were sung.

Plain clothes security police, militia and auxiliary police wearing red arm bands, of whom so many were brought in from Vilnius and other areas February 13, videotaped the assembled worshippers, but did not interfere in the services.

T e l š i a i

On February 16, 1988, the sacristans of the Cathedral of Telšiai, the young men Gediminas Numgaudis and Egidijus Gričius, were getting ready to place flowers on the graves of those tortured to death in the Forest of Rainiai. At the gates of the old city cemetery, security police in mufti detained them without presenting any identification. Some time later, militiamen showed up and drove them to the Telšiai City Police Department, falsely accusing them of resisting officials by using physical force, and sentenced them to fifteen days in jail.

Numgaudis and Gričius, protesting against the illegal actions of the government officials, proclaimed a hunger strike starting February 17, and on February 19, they wrote protests to the procurator and the militia chief of the City of Telšiai.

K e l m ė

On February 10, 1988, Auto Inspector Kazlauskas showed up at the home of Regina Teresiūtė, residing at Kelmė, Laisvės 11, and told her to drive in her own automobile to the Internal Affairs Department in Kelmė, ostensibly for a check of her driver's license.

Miss Teresiūtė refused to listen to the inspector, arguing that she had not broken any traffic laws and if, for unknown reasons, auto inspection staff were displeased with her trip, they should have stopped her on the way.

Inspector Kazlauskas angrily stated that if Miss Teresiūtė would not go of her own free will, she would be taken by force. The front license plate was removed from Miss Teresiūtė's automobile, on the pretext that her car was in

disrepair, and she could not drive it.

On February 14, 1988, District Chairman Valdemaras Meiliulis and an agent of the militia, came to the rectory of Žarėnai-Latveliai (*Šiauliai Rayon*), to look for Regina Teresiūtė. They accused Miss Teresiūtė of living unregistered and thus, breaking passport rules.

Miss Teresiūtė explained that she did not live at that address, but only worked there. The officials demanded that the young woman be sure to come to the Šakynai District Executive Committee, February 16. Miss Teresiūtė categorically refused to go, and explained that February 16 is the national holiday, and that day, she really could not come. If necessary, she would come a day later.

The officials were not pleased with such a reply. That same day, at about 5:00 P.M., District Chairman Meiliulis, Šiauliai Auto Inspection Chief Daknys and one other militiaman, called on Miss Teresiūtė at the rectory. They ordered Miss Teresiūtė to go to the Internal Affairs Department of Kelmė immediately.

Miss Teresiūtė again categorically refused to go anywhere with them. That day, officials came to the rectory on the same business for a third time at about 8:00 P.M. This time, they did not find Miss Teresiūtė.

On February 15, 1988, in Telšiai, Auto Inspection detained Miss Teresiūtė, as she was riding in a small automobile together with the pastor of the parish of Žarėnai-Latveliai, Father Algirdas Pakamanis, and forced her to go to the Telšiai Militia Department. Here, Miss Teresiūtė's driver's license and Father Pakamanis's automobile registration from the Telšiai Militia Department were taken away.

They were taken by force to the Kelmė Internal Affairs Department. There, Miss Teresiūtė was sent from one office to another, where militia officials promised to return her driver's license and the license plate which had been removed, if only she would agree to cooperate with the KGB. Miss Teresiūtė categorically refused. She also refused to write an explanation. "It's not my fault that February 15 is followed by the 16th and not the 17th, for which it was necessary to take away my license plate and license. Next year, I would suggest that in general, February 16 be stricken from the calendar, if it gives you so much unease," Miss Teresiūtė said.

Miss Teresiūtė was released from the Militia Department at about 6:00 P.M.

Viduklė (*Raseiniai Rayon*)

On the evening of January 26, 1988, a group of priests and faithful of one mind with Father Alfonsas Svarinkas gathered in the church of Viduklė for the traditional annual day of prayer for imprisoned priests and other prisoners of conscience. It is the fifth year of Father Svarinkas' incarceration or, as he

says, "the training sent by God". (As of August 1, 1988, Father Svarinskas was released from camp on condition that he leave Lithuania. On August 23, 1988, he arrived in West Germany. - Trans. Note)

For the fifth year, on a quiet January evening, we made the Way of the Cross and Holy Mass was offered. Turning to the Sacrifice of Christ, we thanked the Most High for the fact that one or another from our midst was allowed not by force, but out of his own sincere will, to offer himself and to carry the cross to Golgotha for awhile. That the cross is carried with good will, the general public of Lithuania has understood upon seeing the documentary film *Who Are You, Father Svarinskas?* Seeing the film, even people of inimical beliefs are surprised: "What is this fault of the priest?" In film theaters, during showings, applause was often heard in support of Father Svarinskas.

One thing is clear. So long as there are priests and laity willing to sacrifice themselves for Church and country, so long will the ideals of faith, morality, and freedom in our nation not be destroyed.

K a u n a s

On Sunday, February 21, 1988, after High Mass at the Kaunas Cathedral, where a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Msgr. Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas had taken place, a large group of residents of Kaunas and of faithful who had come from elsewhere, assembled at the grave of Msgr. Jakštas-Dambrauskas, located in the cathedral's outer wall.

The Angelus, Lietuva Brangi, and the national anthem were sung. Verses about the history and occupation of the country, the post-war genocide, and the spiritual and external oppression met with applause. Participants were filmed by more than one movie camera and many chekists in mufti watched.

When the little group of worshippers turned into Vilnius Street, it was attacked by three or four KGB agents who seized the young Gintas Sakavičius, residing in Kapčiamiestis, and dragged him to the Požėla *Rayon* Militia Department, located at the next intersection. The handful of the faithful who witnessed the incident, angered by the behavior of the KGB, followed to demand that the unjustly detained young man be released as soon as possible. All testified that Sakavičius had done nothing wrong, but that he had been seized by some sort of hooligans (you can't call them anything else).

To the energetic demands of those assembled, the militiamen responded with questions whether they were not Sakavičius's relatives and friends, where they were from, etc. The people replied that it was completely immaterial. They had seen that the young man had been arrested for no reason at all, and stated that they would not disperse until he was released.

Militia Chief Šatkauskas told all of them to wait in the street. After several dozen minutes, Sakavičius was released.

Viduklė (Raseiniai Rayon)

On June 27, 1987, in the territory of the parish of Viduklė, at the roadside near a small forest, believers erected a wooden cross with the inscription, "In Memory of the 600 Year Jubilee of the Nation's Baptism."

On June 28, the people devoutly visited the cross, prayed before it, and sang hymns. The night of June 29, *Rayon* KGB, led by Petras Stirba, Manager of the *Prysmantis* Collective Farm, knocked the cross down.

Rudamina (Lazdijai Rayon)

On March 19, 1988, in the church of Rudamina, the Festival of St. Joseph was taking place, together with the Lenten retreat. Mass was being offered for the late Father Juozas Zdebskis, former pastor of the parish, on the occasion of his feast day.

That day, a little group of believing youth from Vilnius, Kaunas, Prienai and elsewhere, were travelling to the services taking place in Rudamina. The militia met those coming from Lazdijai and from Šeštokiai. The officials deceitfully argued that Rudamina is in the border-zone, and anyone wishing to enter needed a permit.

The second version of the lie was that military exercises were taking place in Rudamina, so entry was forbidden. That day, the militia would not allow either people in vehicles nor those travelling on foot, to pass. The officials checked even scheduled buses. From them, Militia Chief Grovis and Junior Sergeant Verchensko removed Robertas Grigas, Marytė Gudaitytė and other active representatives of the Catholic youth.

The approach to Rudamina was opened only after services in church were over.

IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

Žarėnai-Latveliai (Šiauliai Rayon)

On January 9, 1988, Šakynai Chairman Valdemaras Meiliulis and a KGB agent called on Mrs. Barystienė, a resident of Žarėnai-Latveliai. The KGB agent would not give his name. Mrs. Barystienė was warned that her daughter, Rasa Barysaitė, was associating with church washerwoman Regina Teresiūtė, and the latter, in the words of the officials, is a "foreign spy". They tried to frighten the woman, accusing the pastor of the parish, A. Pakamanis, of distributing poisoned candy to children coming to church.

After a brief questioning, Mrs. Barystienė was told to sign a vague official report. On January 13, a similar government delegation again showed up at the Barystis home. Explaining that they were from the newspaper and had come to gather material concerning Father Pakamanis and Miss Teresiūtė, they

repeatedly ordered the parents not to allow the children to associate with them. They kept calling Miss Teresiūtė "a spy".

Žarėnai-Latveliai

On February 2, 1988, student Algirdas Gričius was summoned to see Principal Pustienė in the teachers' room. He was told not to associate with Miss Teresiūtė, who could get him involved in criminal anti-state activity. On February 3, Teacher Narutavičius, the class leader, again "instructed" Gričius on the same subject. During those days, the following pupils of the Žarėnai-Latveliai school were called in to the office of Principal Pustienė: Diana and Roma Samoška, Dalia Stropaitė and Raimunda Gričiūtė. The principal was interested in knowing which of the pupils participated in a little Christmas program arranged at the rectory January 3, what roles they played, who invited them, and who organized them.

Žarėnai-Latveliai

On January 11, 1988, Mrs. Grytienė, a teacher at the nine-year school of Žarėnai-Latveliai, came to the home of her pupil Robertas Gedaminkas, and warned the mother to forbid her son from serving at Mass. After the teacher left, two men and two women showed up at the Gedaminkas home. Without identifying themselves and without even telling where they were from, they began berating Mrs. Gedaminkienė for allowing her son to associate with the pastor of the parish, Father Pakamanis. The strangers were displeased also with the fact that the son goes to other parishes and participates in religious events. The uninvited guests acted quite rudely. They examined items without asking, handled the crucifix and a little statue of Mary. To the owners' warning, they retorted, "What can happen to them? They're only pieces of plaster."

Mrs. Gedaminkienė, annoyed by such arbitrariness, wrote a complaint to the Šiauliai Party Committee.

Kruopiai (Šiauliai Rayon)

On January 11, 1988, at the Kruopiai Middle School, pupil Arūnas Gedaminkas was called into the principal's office. The pupil was asked why he went to church and was warned that his mother would have to pay a fine for him. That same day, tenth-grader A. Raustys was summoned to see the principal. Arūnas had to explain why he had not been in school over Christmas

Saldutiškis (Utena Rayon)

In his article "The *Chronicle* is Shot Through with Calumnies", in *The Peasants' Newspaper*, February 6, 1988, No. 16, Journalist Arnold Chaikovsky gives as an example of calumny the case of the school in Saldutiškis mentioned in the *Chronicle*, in which at the funeral of the local pastor, Father J. Masalskis,

the teachers locked the doors so that pupils would not run over to church — which is right next to the school - during recess, and would not see the bishop. Then the pupils started jumping through the windows.

According to Chaikovsky, the incident was checked and denied by O. Žukaitė, organizer of extracurricular work, Assistant Principal V. Laurinavičienė, Teacher V. Lapinskienė, and students.

The beginning of February, this year, Utena *Rayon* Executive Committee Vice Chairman Simanavičius came to Saldutiškis. "Who jumped through the windows?" Simanavičius asked.

"I," replied eleventh-class Vytautas Štaras.

"How could you have jumped?" The principal did not want to believe it.

"I just opened the window and jumped," Štaras explained.

Alytus

At the beginning of February, 1988, the Principal of Professional and Technical School 57, summoning pupil Gintas Baciуска to his office, grilled him about where his brother Algis Baciуска, and his sister-in-law Monika Baciuskienė-Gražulytė worked. He inquired where he plans to go February 16. The principal telephoned KGB agent Algis Gylys, who came and interrogated the pupil, asking whether the Gražulises did not urge him to go to Vilnius February 16.

They tried to recruit him as a KGB informer. He would only have to stop by Father Gražulis's more often, and inform Gylys what he had heard there. For that purpose, the KGB agent gave him his telephone numbers, at work and at home: 51-530 and 52-083. When necessary, he would invite him through the school for a more thorough talk, Gylys explained.

When Gintas Baciуска came to church February 16, Teacher Berlickas came to see him, and told him to go keep vigil with officials to be honor guard at the grave of Juozapavičius, an officer in Independent Lithuania.

Lithuanian, remember that:

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas
Father Sigitas Tamkevičius
Balys Gajauskas
Petras Gražulis
Gintautas Iešmantas
Viktoras Petkus

and others wear the chains of imprisonment so that you might be able to live and believe in freedom! (See Translators' Note above.)

Lithuania, 1988

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