

La Repressione Culturale In Lituania, Edizioni Jaca Book, Milano, 1972. A cura di Felix Milani, Centro Studi Russia Cristiana, Via Martinengo, Milano. 190 pp.

A useful introduction followed by 23 well-introduced documents take us up to the events in Lithuania of 1972, and set the problems of the Lithuanian Catholic Church firmly in their historical, national and cultural context. Less familiar documents include No. 4, on the predominance of Russian teachers in almost every school. Elsewhere it is made clear that the student teachers' courses on atheism are so thorough that it is almost impossible for Christians to become teachers. No. 5 refers to two events in 1970: the sudden and highly suspicious deaths of several young University teachers – communist but also fervently nationalist – and students' demands for free elections, leading to arrests and the intervention of the Red Army. Nos. 6 and 8 refer to Lithuanians in Soviet camps, where their national solidarity, Christian faith and love overcame barriers of national hatred and laid the foundations for the present links in the fight for human rights. The main key Church documents appear, with a strange omission, however – that of the first appeals (1968 and 1969) from priests demanding legal rights for the Roman Catholic Church.

The Centro Studi Russia Cristiana is to be commended for combining in one book these valuable documents.

JANICE BROWN

Christian Witness

I, Grigori Lavrentievich Vashchenko, live in the town of Nakhodka, Primorsky Territory, USSR. I was born in 1927 in a peasant family. My parents were believing Christians of the Evangelical Faith – Pentecostals. In 1942 my father was sentenced to ten years for his religious convictions, and he perished in the unbearably hard conditions of the extreme north. My mother died in 1941. We children were left as orphans without means of livelihood, and we experienced hard years of hunger. In 1948 I was baptized, promising to serve God faithfully. In 1952 I became involved in religious activity and in 1954 I was appointed pastor of the Chernogorsk congregation. In 1956 I was appointed Senior Presbyter for Kemerovo Region and Krasnoyarsk Territory. During my years of religious activity I was slandered hundreds of times in the Soviet press and several times forced to visit the KGB and other Soviet authorities. This often happened directly from services of worship. I was fined many times. In 1961 I was sentenced for leadership and organization of the religious congregations of Krasnoyarsk Territory and Kemerovo Region to ten years, including two years solitary prison regime and five years exile to the far north. After millions of protests from abroad in connection with the complaint of the Chernogorsk believers to the UN about repressions in the USSR, I was released prematurely in 1964. But I still get constant threats from representatives of various Soviet authorities that they will arrest me and take away our children.

7 May, 1974