

on a frosted window were to demand justice from the weather, or if the paper on which we write were to bring us to trial? It's nonsense, that's all.

I would love You, Lord, even if you were evil, like a hot, dry wind. I would simply not notice Your evilness, just as a normal son loves his father.

When I realized that You could be evil, that You are not obliged to us in any way and are always right, then I understood all Your goodness to me and to us.

And now I thank You all the more for Your love. For You could withhold love, You are not obliged to love, and You have no judge.

Let misfortunes rain down on my head like water, let them drum and drum and drum, whispering: "Curse, curse, curse Him, that is the only freedom You have," — I will merely lower my head further and clench my teeth harder, I will not say anything to anyone and I will not hear anything from anyone. Tears of gratitude will stream from my eyes. I will not wipe them away and feel ashamed. I have nothing to be ashamed of. I will kiss Your hand, light the lamp, kneel down and whisper a prayer of gratitude, because I have realized that for me happiness lies only

in misfortune. Why do You love me so, Lord, why do you trust me so? Not as a slave, but as a friend.

By faith a man is saved. And where there is faith, there will be deeds. As misfortunes multiply, I grow even less like my former self; I believe all the more, and I live in faith. Lord, is this what You wanted?

I believe that when I have drunk the whole cup that You have given me, drunk it to the dregs, on the far side of suffering, which *they* call madness, there will be a door, and I will go through that door, and there will be a blue sky and a warm blue sea. I shall swim and swim, barely moving the tips of my fingers, now in the blue sky, now in the warm sea. But it is not a sea, but a caress, a whole sea of caresses for me alone, a worm like me, and it is not a sky but grace, sheer, boundless grace, without pebbles or thorns. Eternity for me alone. Others have their own eternities. In my Father's house there are many mansions. Glory to Thee, O Lord.

I will not hurry You. You Yourself know when; when I will be able to drain the cup. Your devoted slave. What a beautiful word.

Moscow 1972

Lithuanian Catholics Appeal to the Pope

The article "Lithuania and the Vatican" (pp. 4-11) examines the background to the present situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania. The following appeal, sent to Pope Pius XII in 1948 by Lithuanian Catholics, reveals the pressures imposed on the Church, pressures remarkably similar to those still existing today.

Holy Father, Shepherd of Catholics!

By the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the leader and shepherd of all Catholics. Therefore we, Roman Catholic Christians of the Republic of Lithuania, appeal to Your Holiness for help [. . .]

The writers describe the difficult history of Lithuania up to that point, including the Terror under the Soviet occupation.

Eighty-five per cent of Lithuanians

are Roman Catholic. The influence of religion upon our people has been and still is today very strong. Our nation has a particularly deep reverence for the Virgin Mary. Pius XI called Lithuania the Land of Mary. Religious images and crosses used to stand on all the streets and roads of our land, like symbols of the suffering of our nation. The Bolsheviks are well aware that our people will be able to resist as long as the influence of religion remains intact. That is why our Catholic faith has to bear the heaviest blows of the occupation [. . .]

The Bolsheviks have subjugated all religion. At the present time, they exploit the Russian Orthodox Church, but assiduously spread atheism.

In Lithuania, too, religious services are partially permitted. But the Catholic clergy are supposed to act as informers.

Cut off from Rome, the Bolshevik government aims to make them in every respect its accomplices and submissive tools. When the Lithuanian Catholics resisted this, the campaign of terror and annihilation began [. . .]

Ever since 1944 the authorities have been trying to establish a "national Church" in Lithuania, as in that part of the Ukraine which was taken from Poland. . . . At the same time the government press depicts the Pope as a traitor: Rome is described as a refuge for the scum of all the earth, including murderers. The Pope, they say, has constantly betrayed the Lithuanian people, and is an arch-enemy of the freedom of all small nations, and of Lithuania in particular. The believers are forced to listen to all this. But it does not penetrate to their souls, for the Bolsheviks have not found any accomplices among the priests.

From the very first days of the occupation, Bolshevik agents have been constantly gathering material on the "crimes" of the priests, whether political or moral. Their concept of "crime" is extremely one-sided. If someone within a priest's family circle has aroused the authorities' displeasure, this makes the priest himself a criminal. If someone belonged to "Catholic Action" ten years ago, that is sufficient for his arrest. Armed with this kind of "material", the Bolshevik hangmen go to the priests. They begin with promises, then they confront the victim with his supposed "crimes"; and resort to terror and force. For months they try to break the victim's will-power with such tortures. Priests who stand firm often disappear without trace during the night. Dossiers are soon drawn up on honest clergymen with the help of torture and false witnesses. At the same time the press is full of accusations. The finest priest is stamped as a thief, a debauchee, a bandit and murderer, whom the court then sentences - exercising leniency on account of his clerical standing - to a mere 15 years forced labour in Siberia. If they cannot find anything to pin on a man, he is liquidated by means of provocation, even abuse of the most sacred things. It sometimes happens that a priest is called to a dying man, who is in fact a police informer. The priest is then accused of having rendered his services to a member of the secret resis-

tance movement, and sentenced to 15 years forced labour [. . .]

Despite all this, the clergy are extremely steadfast, although hundreds of them have already been deported to forced labour. They enjoy the unreserved trust of the people. The lesser servants of the Church are equally harassed and persecuted with very similar provocations. Every priest is kept under surveillance by several agents. Watch is kept from neighbouring houses to see who visits him, with whom he has contact [. . .] If a priest even addresses someone on the street, it arouses the suspicion of the police [. . .]

Priests are subject to excessive taxation and other disabilities. The churches also have to pay exorbitant taxes on their own buildings.

Despite many efforts, there is no longer any religious press. Even the printing of the smallest prayer book is forbidden. There is only a government press which never prints anything about religion but disparaging criticisms and defamations. Woe to the man who attempts to reply to these attacks from the pulpit [. . .]

Art and education are totally dominated by the Russian-atheist outlook.

In 1944 there were three theological seminaries in Lithuania. Two were closed in 1946 - allegedly because the rooms were needed for military purposes, although they have remained unused to the present day. The students were allowed to move to the seminary at Kaunas. In the same year a decree was passed to the effect that the total number of students could not exceed 150; none of the rest, about 200 of them, could continue to follow his vocation. Meanwhile the number of students has been further reduced to 60. In future there will be only eight new priests each year for the whole of Lithuania, while every year 25 to 30 clergymen die - apart from the arrests and deportations. There are already many congregations where three or four priests have been arrested one after the other. Meanwhile one priest has to look after two or more congregations. Priests who are old or sick have to resume their ministry. The seminaries are maintained exclusively out of gifts from believers.

During the war about a hundred churches were destroyed or severely damaged in Lithuania. There is no chance of their restoration. The authorities will not give any building materials for this purpose and they refuse building permission for the restoration of the churches. What is done here and there happens in secret. In many places the believers pray secretly in barns.

The government aims to abolish the old system of church elders in the congregations and to replace them by state church councils, on the Orthodox pattern. Church affairs in Lithuania are under the representative for religious affairs of the Council of Ministers, Gailevicius, Party member and former secret policeman. Councils of twenty (*dvyd-
tsatki*) are supposed to be formed alongside each district official and in every church. Some of the members of the council are to be named by the government, the others require government approval. The government has given no guidelines or directives concerning the activity, duties and rights of these councils. Up to now it is only known that when the council is formed and has been approved by the government, it is supposed to conclude a contract with the responsible government body for the leasing of the church. The council also has the right to close a church, and to reject or remove a priest. The most important thing is that the members of the council can be more easily enlisted by the secret police. The Catholic Church is resisting the formation of such councils. There has been a severe struggle over this matter for several years now [. . .]

The writers describe Bolshevik methods of subjugation, by which people are terrorized into compliance and deceit. Conditions of detention are dreadful. Party members enjoy no respect from the people.

Foreign visitors are even shown secret policemen kneeling in the churches, pretending to be devout worshippers – this is all part of the propaganda.

The four-year-long struggle which the Lithuanian people have waged for religious and national freedom has had frightful consequences. The whole land is full of violence, fear, blood and tor-

ment. More than 100,000 believers have been tortured to death or starved or frozen to death in Siberia. Every day claims fresh victims. There is not a single house where tears have not been shed. A high percentage of the clergy is either in Siberia or in hiding or forming part of the underground movement in the forests. There is only one bishop left in the whole of Lithuania. Two are dead (Karevicius and Karosas), four have been imprisoned (Borisevicius, Matulionis, Ramanauskas and Reinyas). The activity of the Curias has been severely restricted, the seminary is barely still functioning, the monks have been liquidated or exiled. No one knows when the secret police will knock at his door. Everything is going on very quietly, inconspicuously, in order to keep the outside world in ignorance [. . .]

Lithuanians will continue their struggle for freedom, despite the terrible sacrifices involved.

Holy Father! We know how many cares lie heavy upon Your Holiness today. But in the name of the torments we have already suffered and still suffer, we still venture to ask you, as the head of all Catholics, for your help. We have no more neighbours to whom we can entrust our destiny and the destiny of our people. We, the Catholic inhabitants of Lithuania, are – under your leadership – the only Catholics in North-East Europe, a little island in the sea of other confessions. We cannot survive this pressure much longer, we are on the point of perishing. Our faith, our customs, our traditions, even our language – everything will be destroyed. We often think of the Turkish invasion in the Middle Ages, of the Arab hordes, of the time when the great men of Rome arose: Urban II, Innocent III. The hordes from the East today fear neither speeches nor diplomatic protests. We often ask ourselves: where are the peoples of the civilized world? Where are the hundred million Christians? Are there no more fighters for truth, no great men in the world any more? Do they not know how their Christian brothers and sisters are being destroyed? Are the Christians of the world caught in a deceptive slumber, believing themselves secure, do they think that the hordes

from the East will call a halt after they have destroyed us? No! [. . .] Bolshevism is getting ready to destroy the civilization, the culture and the Christianity of the world [. . .]

Holy Father! We ask you to proclaim for all believers of the world a Lithuanian Day, as Benedict XV of pious memory did in 1917. Let the world learn of the torments, persecutions and distress of the Lithuanian Catholics, caused by 20th century godlessness.

We ask Your Holiness to direct a word of public comfort and encouragement to the Lithuanian people. Holy Father, speak a word of encouragement, as the first Pope, St. Peter, once did in Rome. What we are suffering for our Mother, the Catholic Church, is just as great.

We ask you to pass our complaints on to the United Nations, so that the rulers of the nations may put an end to our torments.

We ask for more frequent and longer Lithuanian broadcasts. Do we not deserve this on account of the sacrifices we are making for our holy faith? [. . .]

We are dying, but in our death we wish to hear your word of comfort, and

the assurance of the Catholic world that our children will not have to bear the yoke of slavery any more. We are convinced that your mighty word will shake the leaders of the freedom-loving peoples awake.

Holy Father, this letter is not written as we would have wished. We are writing underground, by flickering lamp-light, every moment expecting the arrival of the secret police. We deliberately avoid giving the exact name of this place and our own names, so as not to divulge any information to the secret police.

If this letter reaches Your Holiness, we may no longer be alive. By the time it reaches its goal, some of those who carried it on them will have been felled by the bullets of the secret police.

Holy Father, give us, those who are dying for the freedom of the faith and of our people, your blessing!

Praise be to Jesus Christ, Lord of the living and the dead!

Vilnius, in occupied Lithuania,
20 September 1948.

Roman Catholic Christians
of the Republic of Lithuania.

Slovak Catholics Protest

Catholics in Slovakia have distributed a leaflet protesting at the treatment of believers. Two thousand copies of the leaflet were printed, it was reported. The text appeared in Die Welt, 29 November, 1975. A report also appeared in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 26 September, 1975 (see RCL Vol 4, No. 3, p. 58).

This year our State is rendering account for 30 post-war years. We want to use this occasion to look also at the reverse side of our social reality, not solely at the number of newly erected factories, streets, dams, schools, department stores and apartments, but also at the moral aspect.

The materialist dogma in our country has been elevated to the level of scientific doctrine. We are suspicious when so much science has to be continually cited. The more closely we examine the world order, the clearer it becomes that atheism is unscientific. Atheism came to birth in the middle of the 19th century,

but science has made enormous progress since then. Dialectical materialism claims that only matter exists. According to its theory, only what can be proved experimentally and measured is true. But who has succeeded in measuring eternity and infinity?

Atheism is a negative creed. A grandmother in a small Czechoslovak village simply believes the priest when he says that God exists. In contrast, the atheist believes his propagandist who claims that there is no God behind the world order. But the grandmother at least feels that a force must rule this order. Atheism is not the ideology of the workers but the product of the bourgeois intelligentsia. That is what Lenin wrote in his pamphlet *What is to be done?* Currently we note that the majority of the Nobel prize winners, the geniuses of present day humanity, are convinced believers who are applying their faith in practice.

An ideological weakness of the "scien-