

³¹ *Amnesty International Briefing*, "Czechoslovakia", March 1977, p. 2.

³² "Religious Freedom in Czechoslovakia" by Jirí Otava, *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1977, pp. 24-28.

³³ *Statistická Ročenka ČSSR*, 1976, Praha 1976, p. 514. Available in Radio Free Europe, *Czechoslovak Situation Report 2*, 19 January 1977, p. 19.

³⁴ "Religious freedom in Czechoslovakia" by Jirí Otava, *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1977, p. 26, and *Hlas z Ríma*, No. 1, January 1977, p. 21.

³⁵ *Amnesty International Briefing*, "Czechoslovakia", March 1977, p. 12.

³⁶ *Hlas z Ríma*, No. 10, October 1976, p. 23.

³⁷ *CARIS*, Report 8/77, 31 March 1977.

³⁸ Radio Free Europe, *Czechoslovak Situation Report 11*, 23 March 1977.

³⁹ "Last Will of Czech Civil Rights Leader Defends Charter 77 Campaign", *The Times*, 15 March 1977, p. 8.

Church in Slovakia Undermined

Pavol Čarnogurský, a 70-year-old journalist in Slovakia, wrote to Bishop Josef Feranec on 29 August 1976. He was arrested as a result on 10 November 1976. The original text was published in the Slovak émigré journal, Hlas z Ríma No. 2, February 1977 (pp. 21-22).

Reverend Father Bishop,

After reading the leading article in the last number of the Catholic paper, *Katolícké noviny* (No. 25, 29 August 1976) it is impossible for even an ordinary believer not to react. Because of his religious convictions and duties which bind him to the Church and link him with her, he not only recognizes but instinctively senses that a process of extermination is being proclaimed against the Church in Slovakia in every speech. In this article Jozef Dovala, the Vicar General of Banská-Bystrica, wrote among other things: "Priests and believers participate in building our new life and they share in its fruits. The Constitution of our country respects the beliefs of every person and guarantees religious freedom." With grief in my heart, however, I must maintain that only a mocking cynic could have written this, in defiance of reality, in order to lower the newspaper in which he writes to an absurd level and to compromise the authority in whose name he dared to write.

What then are the real facts about religion today, regardless of what is said in the Constitution and Art. 7 of the Helsinki Agreement, which was signed a year ago? Two weeks ago on 18 August 1976 *Pravda*, the daily paper of the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party, published an article written by Petr Prusák, a member of the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party. This was a balance sheet demonstrating the conclusions of Party congresses on atheist education in Slovakia. The main point of this balance sheet was summed up by this official in the sentence: "Slovakia has become a country of mass atheism". Such a daring and far-reaching claim would hardly have been made so explicitly by a competent Party official in the government of any other socialist State. While it is impossible to doubt that P. Prusák had a real basis for his claim, although he does not explain by what means and where this was achieved, it must be faced as a hard reality. In Slovakia there has been special atheist pressure.

I am convinced that the Slovakian church leaders are certainly greatly concerned and absorbed by the importance of the article and have taken into consideration its consequences for themselves as well as for the future of the Church in Slovakia. I only wish to draw attention to the claim that the essential

success of mass atheism in Slovakia is due, according to the author, to conscientious atheistic work which has been systematically carried out. This he particularly emphasizes. In this mass abandonment of the heritage of our fathers – the Catholic Church – by its present-day sons and daughters, we must recognize the fact that the Church's leadership now includes certain persons who perform the necessary pageantry of high church functions in order to ease defections and to give mass atheism free rein to the extent that their position permits this. Unfortunately we must put *Katolícké noviny* on the same level: it is taking on the appearance of a periodical which is run by crafty toadies who have only one theme. This has little to do with either religion or the difficult position of the Church today – involving chiefly the suffering of religious parents – a position with which it is in total disagreement. This does not help advance the important task of peace, cooperation and relaxation of tension.

Forgive me, Reverend Father, for the bitter tone of this letter. It is not so much bitter as sorrowful. This is because of my reaction to the blow which we suffered from the above-mentioned article by your Vicar General.

If I had not written this I would have found myself in a difficult dilemma: would I myself still be a Catholic? Or should I rightly be included in Mr. Prusák's concept of "mass atheism" in Slovakia? If I had not reacted to this dangerous phenomenon by writing to the responsible person at a time when the Church's very existence is in question, it would mean that I had no relation to the Church – that historical force which created Catholic Slovakia with all its spiritual, moral and cultural riches.

Your respectful child,

Pavol Čarnogurský

Bratislava,
29 August, 1976

Charter 77 - Document No. 9

By the end of April 1977 the Charter 77 movement had issued nine documents which dealt with various aspects of legal, political, educational, social and religious discrimination. "Document No. 9", printed below, is concerned with religious freedom in Czechoslovakia and

was handed to the Czechoslovak government on 25 April 1977. It appeals to the government to adhere to the Constitution and other laws and agreements on religious freedom, and gives examples showing how the State has consistently contravened these laws.

"Omnia sponte fluant, absit violentia rebus." (Let everything happen freely and without violence.)

J. A. Comenius

Recognition and implementation of human rights is becoming an issue of crucial importance both nationally and internationally. The struggle for human dignity, for the respect of the individual and his faith, for freedom of conscience and conviction is increasing. At the same time, mankind is being threatened

by a wave of barbarism, violence and terror. Human rights and the very principles incorporated during the last decades into significant documents of the United Nations are being brutally trampled upon.

It is to be welcomed that some of these documents (two of the International Covenants) recently became part of our legislation. It is important that the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreement and an Agreement on the Prevention of Educational Discrimination were signed by our representatives, and that