

# LITUANUS

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## NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS PROTEST IN LITHUANIA

From the Underground Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania

PART TWO

### EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

*Since 1971 the militant Catholic clergy and laymen in Lithuania have been publishing Lietuvos Kataliku Bažnyčios Kronika — Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania (hereafter cited as LKB Kronika). Until the Spring of 1974 nine issues of the underground publications have been received in the West. Despite the intensive efforts to suppress the publication, the Lithuanian Chronicle so far has escaped KGB discovery. It has appeared approximately quarterly in type-written form of about 30 typed pages each issue (mostly single-spaced). The Chronicle has published texts of statements by believers and clergy, protesting Soviet religious discrimination and suppression, court proceedings against the clergy and laymen for religious activities, survey of events in various parts of Lithuania, and interpretive articles on the status of the Catholic Church. In recent issues the Chronicle began to include also materials not directly related to religion. It has reported on the suppression of human rights in general and particularly on the suppression of national rights.*

*The following are selected items from the 6th and 7th issues of the Chronicle, which cover approximately the period from the beginning of 1973 to the end of August of 1973.*

### **5. Complaints of Lithuanian Catholics concerning the discrimination of religious students and the limitations on religious press\***

To:

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR

Copy to:

The Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs K. Tumėnas

### A COMPLAINT OF BELIEVERS OF LITHUANIA

The decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, dated April 12, 1968, "On the Procedure for Consideration of Citizens' Proposals, Statements, and Complaints," states:

Under the contemporary conditions of development of Soviet society complaints are normally a way of reacting to instances of violations of the rights of citizens and their interests, safeguarded by law... The complaints also indicate that there are serious shortcomings in the work of many organs of the state and society.

V. Kurojedov, Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, writes:

It is necessary to react with great sensitivity to the complaints of believers that their rights are being violated. All complaints must be considered and resolved in strict conformity to the decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, dated April 12, 1968. (*Religion and Law*, 1971, p. 24).

In the beginning of March, 1973, we, the believers of Lithuania, decided to address ourselves to the agencies of Soviet government in Lithuania, requesting to terminate discrimination of religious students, not to force them to speak and act against their beliefs, to teach history objectively in the schools, and not to restrict the publication of essential religious literature. To make the Soviet government aware of the opinion of Lithuanian believers, signatures were collected for the complaints, addressed to the Ministry of Education of the Lithuanian SSR and to the Representative of the Council for

Religious Affairs K. Tumėnas. If one is to believe the Soviet press, then all those who make the governing organs aware of present ills, demand their elimination, strengthen socialist legality, participate in the control of the State, and are moral individuals, deserving respect. (Cf. "Švyturys," 1973, No. 6, pp. 8-10.)

But as soon as the security officials found out about the petition, the "witch hunt" began: innocent people were subjected to searches, inquisitions, and threats of imprisonment. This is how the security officials of Vilnius, Kaunas, Panevėžys, Lazdijai, Ignalina, and elsewhere behaved. K. Tumėnas, the Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs, ordered the Lithuanian bishops and administrators, through the deans and priests, to obstruct the collection of the signatures by the people. The security officials succeeded in confiscating a part of the petition.

Despite this "reaction with great sensitivity to the complaints of believers," 14,284 believers signed the statement addressed to the Ministry of Education of the Lithuanian SSR, while 16,498 believers signed the statement addressed to the Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs.

Since the officials of state security considered the appeal of the believers to the Soviet government a political crime and are terrorizing the circulators of the petition, we are refraining from sending the original copies of statements, with all the signatures, to the aforementioned agencies. This will be done only when the believers will become convinced of the good will of the Soviet government and when the officials of state security will cease interfering in the religious affairs of the believers.

The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet has requested expression of opinions concerning the law on the fundamental principles of education, submitted by the Council of Ministers of the USSR in April of this year. The proposal completely ignores the rights of religious parents and children. It is contrary to Article V of Paris "Convention of the Struggle Against Discrimination in the Area of Education," adopted on December 14-15, 1960, which demands that the parents "be assured religious and moral upbringing of children in harmony with their beliefs." Our statement to the Ministry of Education of the Lithuanian SSR sufficiently informs the Soviet government about the kind of teaching and upbringing of children of religious parents that is desired in Lithuania.

Enclosure:

Text of the Statement to the Ministry of Education of the Lithuanian SSR

Text of the Statement to the Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs K. Tumėnas

May 14, 1973

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\* From LKB Kronika, 1973, No. 6.