

# Letters to the Editor

## **The Rev. Roman Kravec OSBM writes:**

The Rev. Michael Bourdeaux in his article on the Uniate Church in Czechoslovakia failed to mention that most of these Uniates are Ukrainians. Indeed, the impression given is that they are Slovak.

This is the argument of Michael Lacko, S.J., in "The Re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia" (offprint from *Slovak Studies* XI). Accepting as correct government statistics, he asserts that the number of Ukrainians-Ruthenians can hardly reach 50,000 out of 315,000 Greek-Catholics.

More accurate information can be gleaned from *UKRAINE: A Concise Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, p. 243 (University of Toronto Press, 1963): "Transcarpathia lies on the borders of three peoples – Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians. [ . . . ] The western part of Transcarpathia (the Presov region) was not included in the Ukrainian SSR, but has remained in Slovakia, where the Ukrainians were undergoing a certain degree of Slovakization." There one can find more reliable pre-war statistics.

I signal as potentially useful: Peter G. Stercho, *Diplomacy of Double Morality: Europe's Crossroads in Carpatho-Ukraine 1919-1939*, Carpathian Research Center, 975 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10021, USA, 1971.

*In RCL Vol. 1, Nos. 4-5 (p. 64) it was stated that an Albanian priest had been shot, apparently for secretly baptizing a child.*

## **Mrs. S. Devereux of Wellington, New Zealand, writes:**

You stated that Fr. Shtefan Kurti was executed in Albania for baptizing a baby. The true facts about the case are in the enclosed letter to me from Mr. R. Taylor who was living in Albania at the time. Mr. Taylor knows Albanian and thinks so highly of Albanian conditions that his family has settled there. (1 July 1974)

## **Mr. Taylor, of Albania, writes:**

Shtefan Kurti had a long history of treason. After the war (1945-46) he was convicted of working as an agent of the British Intelligence service, and was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

After ten years of corrective labour, Shtefan Kurti managed to convince the authorities that he was sincerely remorseful for his past actions and had reformed himself. He was released from prison and went to the

village of Milot where he was eventually accepted as a member of an agricultural co-op. There he gradually gathered around himself a group of backward elements, mostly former rich peasants and landlords, whom he organized to carry out economic sabotage through damage to crops, stores, machinery, culminating in arson.

When this was eventually discovered, Shtëfan Kurti was put on trial in the town of Milot in 1971. In open court, attended by virtually the entire population of the co-op, he stated that his aim had been to sabotage the economy of the co-op so that the peasants would become dissatisfied and rise against the people's State. "Why did you want to bring this about", asked the judge, and before all his fellow citizens he declared, "I am an enemy of the people's State because I am a Catholic and the people's State is opposed to the Church". He was sentenced to death for treason and shot in 1971.

In 1973 the Vatican made propaganda out of the claim that he had been shot for baptizing a baby. The only part of it that is true is that Shtëfan Kurti was shot. There are no concentration camps in Albania.

*The receipt of this statement coincides almost exactly with the publication in Sweden of an account of life in an Albanian concentration camp by a young Greek, Yousef Balyrakis. Balyrakis was imprisoned in Corfu in January 1972 and escaped by making an exhausting swim across to Albania. He was arrested for entering Albania without permission and spent more than a year in the concentration camp in Ballsh, where conditions were extremely harsh. (Reported in The Sunday Times, 7 July 1974)*

---

#### APOLOGY

A line (verse 3, l.4) in *Solzhenitsyn, February 1974* by Elizabeth Jennings (*RCL* Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 17) was wrongly printed. It should read: "To teach compassion to the wondering West,".

The editor would like to apologize for omitting to state that Canon John Arnold was the translator of *Solzhenitsyn's Prayer* (*RCL* Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 27).