

allegedly created by Dandaron. This word was either invented by them or taken from some unknown source. B. D. Dandaron "had the misfortune" to be born with a name that comes from the name Dandar. This name is in fact a corruption in Mongolian pronunciation of the Sanscrit word *tantra*. In court there was talk of the "statute of the *Dandriisky* (not *Dandariisky!*) *iogin*". One of the members of the group, from whom a copy of the "Statute of the *tantriisky iogin*" was confiscated, had made a spelling error and written the word *tantriisky* according to Mongolian pronunciation (i.e. *dandriisky*). Now this spelling mistake has led to a serious charge against Dandaron, that he created and propagated his own teaching. *Tantra* is an essential part of Buddhist teaching. Dandaron did not create any teaching of his own – neither "Dandarism" nor "Dandrism".

It is not surprising that after such "information" in the press, the most fantastic rumours have been circulating in Ulan-Ude and the region about the "band of scholars", vice, a fanatical sect committing human sacrifice and so on.

We are Soviet people. We respect our Soviet laws and consider them the most just and humane in the world. Our fatherland is the only country in the world where freedom of conscience is not only proclaimed but guaranteed by a whole series of legal acts.

The artificially blown-up "affair of the Dandaron group", violations of the legislation on cults, the use of administrative, not ideological means in the struggle against religion – all this can only play into the hands of bourgeois propaganda, spreading slanderous falsifications on the position of religious organizations in the USSR.

It is only by the decision of the investigating and court bodies that we have been united into the so-called "Dandaron group", or rather, have begun to be called the "Dandaron group".

We never wanted to form any group or to oppose society in any way. We want to live in society and be useful. Why do they want to put us outside society, why have they organized base slander not only against believers, but also against people only indirectly associated with them?

We ask you to help us restore justice; to explain to the relevant bodies the violations of the legislation on cults which they have committed. And if we are in error, please help us to understand where our error and guilt lie.

15 February 1973

3. *The Voice of Lithuanian Catholics*

Recent events in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania have focussed the attention of the world on this small country. Street riots on the one hand, and massive documentary evidence of unrest in the Church on the other, have demonstrated both the problems and the determination of Lithuanian people to defend their rights: rights of national identity and of religious freedom.

As a sequel to the article "Recent Events in the Lithuanian Catholic Church" (RCL No. 1) a selection of recent documents written by Lithuanian Catholics, both priests and lay people, is presented. The selection falls into three parts: administrative problems; theological education; the religious education of children.

I

Lithuania is divided into six dioceses of which four are vacant. Two bishops, Vincentas Sladkevicius and Julijonas Steponavicius, arrested in 1957 and 1961

respectively, are still under restraint and unable to exercise their office. Here is the text of a petition from 61 Lithuanian priests:

To the General Secretary of
the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
(Mr. Brezhnev)

To the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR
(Mr. Kosygin)

Copies to:-

President of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers,
Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs attached to
the Council of the Lithuanian SSR,
Leaders of the Lithuanian Episcopate.

PETITION

(From priests of the Vilnius Archdiocese of the Lithuanian Republic)

In January 1961 Bishop Julijonas Steponavicius, Apostolic Administrator of the Vilnius Archdiocese and the Panevezys Diocese, was without known cause and without trial removed from office and sent far away from the diocese.

There have been cases where some priests have been deprived of their authorisation to serve and for a certain time they have been forbidden to act as priests. However, after this term expired, they have again been permitted to serve in their churches. There have even been cases where a priest has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment and, at the end of it has returned to his work and even been promoted by the government (this happened with Bishop Juozapas Matulaitis-Labukas, now Apostolic Administrator of the Kaunas Archdiocese and the Vilkaviskis Diocese, and with Ljudvikas Pavilonis, formerly priest of Klaipeda parish and now an assistant bishop).

But our bishop, Julijonas Steponavicius, who was consecrated with the permission of the Soviet authorities, has been forbidden to serve as a bishop for nine years now. Therefore we ask the Soviet Government to pay attention to this and to restore him as Apostolic Administrator of the Vilnius Archdiocese and of the Panevezys Diocese.

8 September 1970 (Signed by 61 priests, including Fr. A. Keina – see p. 52)

One of the outstanding developments in the field of Lithuanian Catholic documents, and in the whole field of samizdat (self-published documents) whether religious or secular, has been the appearance of the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Nos. 1 and 2, dated 1972, reached the West some months ago and have been translated into English (the CSRC hopes to edit these in booklet form). No. 4 (but not No. 3) has also reached the West, but has not yet been translated. Chronicle No. 1 stated the following about Bishop Steponavicius:

At the end of 1971 the priests of Panevezys Diocese appealed to the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, A. Kosygin, and to the Lithuanian Council of Ministers. Their statement noted that since 1961 Panevezys Diocese had been deprived of its bishop who, at the instigation of the authorities of the Lithuanian Republic, was exiled to Zagarys, Joniskis District. The priests asked that Bishop Julijonas Steponavicius be allowed to perform his duties in Panevezys

Diocese, since the Lithuanian Constitution and the law do not permit such an abrogation of rights to citizens who have not been legally sentenced. It also noted that the absence of a bishop from his diocese is abnormal, since, according to Church Law, in the absence of a bishop an Administrator may direct the diocese only for a short time.

The Soviet authorities did not respond to the appeal. The official of the Council for Religious Affairs reprimanded some priests, reminding them that it was useless to write such appeals, since they would be ignored. The Soviet authorities consider Bishop Steponavicius as disloyal to the state because he carried out his pastoral duties uncompromisingly.

The "Memorandum of the Roman Catholics of Lithuania" – an appeal sent to Mr. Brezhnev, dated December 1971 – outlines the harassment of the Lithuanian Church and asks for justice. The organizers collected a total of 17,059 signatures – there would have been more but for KGB interference. We quote the final paragraph of this appeal:

We could point out many more cases of discrimination which have embittered our life and sown disillusionment with the Soviet Constitution and laws. We therefore ask the Soviet Government to grant us the freedom of conscience which has been guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR, but which has not been put into practice heretofore. What we want is not pretty words in the press and on the radio, but serious governmental efforts that would help us Catholics to feel citizens of the Soviet Union with equal rights.

To try to deaden the effect of this Memorandum, in April 1972 the Lithuanian bishops were made to sign a "Pastoral Letter" (published in Tablet, 5 Aug., 1972, pp. 749-750) to be read in churches. The incident was described in the Chronicle No. 2. This Letter stated:

In recent days a number of irresponsible people have (in certain parishes) acted in the name of priests and laity, collecting signatures near churches or even inside the churches themselves, sometimes even going from house to house, asking for signatures on texts they provide, or even for signatures without any text, allegedly with the purpose of ensuring that priests, supervisors or chaplains, intended for other congregations, should not be sent there. These people later change the text or compose a new one only after the signatures (which they then add) have been collected. These are falsifications! We are very surprised that some of the faithful think it permissible to give their signatures without knowing what the purpose is and without being aware of the consequences. We must not forget that a signature placed below an irresponsible document affects the relationship between Church and State, and that it leads to misunderstandings. Such manifestations cannot bring any good to the Church.

The following month there came a reply to this "Pastoral Letter" (text in the Tablet, 6 January 1973, pp. 21-2) written by an unknown number of priests. The reply refuted the episcopal charges of "falsification" and stated:

The "Letter" was packed with familiar quotations from the Gospels. Many people think that two more should have been quoted: "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10:11); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other

way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). It is scandalous that the Bible should be used to gloss over matters that are far from holy . . .

Referring to the sentence in the "Letter" – "We must not forget that a signature placed below an irresponsible document affects the relationship between Church and State" – the priests continue:

What kind of relations are they talking about here? About the relations between cat and mouse? Can we be happy about good relations? Lithuania's Catholics have no catechisms, prayer books, church press or literature. The children of believing parents are in atheist schools. The seminary produces four to six priests every year, whereas 20-30 die each year. Priests are jailed merely because they dare to teach the truths of the faith at the request of parents. Priests are punished merely because children serve at Mass and participate in processions. Without trials, two bishops have been banished for over 10 years. Very active priests are hustled off to small parishes and elderly priests are sent to large ones. Catholic intellectuals are fired from their jobs for attending church. Representatives of the atheist state convene bishops' conferences and dictate "pastoral letters". What more do we have to lose that we have not already lost? A little personal well-being and limited personal freedom. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10).

II

An important question, mentioned above, is the position of the only remaining theological seminary in Lithuania, at Kaunas. On 8 January 1969, Fr. Petras Dumbliauskas and Fr. Juozas Zdebskis appealed to the authorities:

To the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers
Copies to:
President of the Soviet Council for Religious Affairs
Leaders of the Lithuanian Catholic Church

DECLARATION

We the undersigned Lithuanian priests, deem it our duty to inform you, Prime Minister, that in our country there are repeated violations of the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the USSR Constitution, especially in regard to the theological seminary in Kaunas.

Prior to 1940, Lithuania had 12 bishops, 1,640 priests, and four seminaries with 466 students, while at the present time there are only four bishops (two of them unable to serve), some 800 priests and a single seminary for priests with 27 students. These numbers were reduced because officials of the secular government are administering the internal affairs of the seminary. In 1944, for example, the seminary for priests in Kaunas had 400 students. In 1946, the Soviet government reduced their number to 150. At present only 30 young men are allowed to study there. Therefore only five or six new priests graduate annually. Only four priests are expected to graduate in 1969.

Because of the shortage of priests, it is already impossible to serve the faithful. Some of the priests are old and some are already taking care of several parishes. Since some 30 priests die each year in Lithuania, it is obvious

that some government officials are using administrative measures to achieve their goal: the destruction of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. . . .

The rector of the seminary is obliged each year to send the list of candidates to the Lithuanian representative of the Council for Religious Affairs, so that he can determine their loyalty to the Soviet government. He has the power to eliminate any candidate without any explanation, despite the fact that the candidate for admission is a full citizen of the Soviet Union, has never been tried and has committed no crimes against the Soviet Government. We do not understand why young men who have graduated from higher and special schools are not entitled to enrol in the seminary. Why do candidates, once removed from the list, lose their right to apply for entry to the seminary again? Why are candidatures sometimes rejected for quite insignificant reasons? We know that other educational institutions are not treated this way. Is this not a violation of the Soviet Constitution?

The faithful and priests of Lithuania have been distressed for a long time by this abnormal situation of the theological seminary in Kaunas. In 1968 the priests of the Telsiai Diocese wrote to you, Prime Minister, on this matter. This year, the priests of Vilkaviskis addressed themselves to the Lithuanian bishops and administrators on this question.

We therefore ask you, Prime Minister, kindly to allow the Catholic seminary in Kaunas to manage its internal affairs independently, to permit the church authorities to set the number of students to be enrolled, and not to put any obstacles before them.

The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church No. 2 describes the seminary's position in 1972:

On 16 April in the Kaunas Basilica, Monsignor J. Labukas ordained six students in the fourth year of theology. (During the past year, 12 priests died in Lithuania.) Next year six more seminarians should be ordained.

Excluding the six neo-presbyters in the seminary, this year there are only 33 students:

Philosophy course	- 11
Theology I	- 9
Theology II	- 7
Theology III	- 6

During the past year the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs visited the seminary's library to see what kind of literature the seminarians were reading. He was not pleased because they were not reading Marxist classics.

In the middle of the past academic year, the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs wanted to expel several seminarians. His reasons for this are not clear. Many guess that it was simply blackmail, to keep the seminarians in a state of constant fear.

It appears that Mr. Rugienis, who has been the Lithuanian representative of the Council for Religious Affairs since 1966, was dismissed at the beginning of this year in a government attempt to adapt its atheist policy in the difficult conditions of Lithuania.

III

In the priests' reply to the "Pastoral Letter" of spring 1972 the question of the religious education of children is mentioned. This problem recurs throughout Lithuanian Catholic documents. It was for the religious instruction of children that the now well-known cases of Fr. A. Seskevicius, Fr. J. Zdebskis (one of the signatories of the letter quoted above on the Kaunas seminary) and Fr. P. Bubnys, came to court. A less known case is that of Fr. A. Keina, (one of the signatories of the letter cited above about Bishop Steponavicius). The Lithuanian Catholic Chronicle No. 1 tells of the administrative pressure against Fr. Keina:

On 28 September 1970, the Administrative Penalties Commission of Varena District fined Fr. Algimantas Keina, the priest of Valkininkai, 50 roubles for "violating the law on religious cults". Fr. A. Keina took the Penalties Commission to the People's Court of Varena District and asked that the unjustified fine be revoked. . . .

On 5 November 1971 Fr. Keina appealed to the USSR Procurator's Office, which replied that he had been justly fined. It neglected to notice that the Administrative Penalties Commission of Varena District was so eager to fine the priest that it *falsified the date*: the case regarding the "teaching" of the three children was actually written up in 1968, but the commission changed the date to 1970, since it knew that a penalty cannot be imposed later than a month after the violation occurs.

In October 1971 the same commission again fined the priest of Valkininkai 50 roubles because he allowed minors to serve at Mass. During the commission's meeting, Fr. Keina was *not permitted to explain the situation*. Again he appealed to the People's Court to revoke the fine. The first session of the court was held on 15 November 1971 in Varena. Fr. Keina explained that he did not organize the children and that he did not teach them to serve at Mass – they came voluntarily and with their parents' permission. He showed that the decree of the Presidium of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, dated 12 May 1966, did not forbid minors to serve at religious services, yet he was being penalised under it.

Fr. Keina has now been deprived of his exemption from military duty and drafted into a labour battalion. Another case, that of Fr. P. Orlickas, is described in the following extracts from the Lithuanian Catholic Chronicle No. 1 (The complete passage is printed in ELTA, New York, No. 1, 1973, pp. 10-11):

On 3 December 1971 the parish priest of Margininkai, Fr. Petras Orlickas, was sentenced for violating Article 143 of the Lithuanian Penal Code – he played volleyball with children! The decision of the administrative commission of Kaunas district has it in black and white that Fr. Orlickas worked with children (sports, playing volleyball), showed slides, etc. For a long time atheists and Party workers seemed not to notice the children who used to play rowdy games and curse excessively in the playground by the *kolchoz* (collective farm) office. The parish priest noticed it and fixed up another volleyball court. Not even the worst rowdies would curse there.

Whence the sudden anxiety of the authorities of Kaunas district, the Party workers and some teachers? During a child's funeral many children were noticed in the church. Teachers even tried to lead them by the arms out of the church. In addition, several children used to serve as altar boys. The headmistress tried hard to pull the children away from the altar, but did not succeed. Then, as

usual, local authorities came to the aid of the Soviet school. Regular security agents or their collaborators (we do not know exactly) photographed the children by the altar to prevent them denying their "crime". Some mothers, waiting in vain for their children to return from church, finally went to search for them. Indignant about the terrorization of their children, they took them home. . . .

The atheist government is trying to win Lithuania's youth to its side by means of punishments, interrogations and even prison. These are, of course, extreme means, but they are not infrequent. Their purpose is to intimidate the priests into abandoning their duties, as well as to scare the youngsters away from the Church. Sometimes they succeed. But recently the opposite phenomenon can be observed – persecution strengthens the priests as well as the parents and children. More and more priests now even risk their freedom, but refuse to compromise their conscience, more and more parents begin to understand that youngsters must be defended against all kinds of bullies who try to destroy the faith by force and who put their careers above human considerations and the parents' rights. More and more children feel bold enough to proclaim their convictions publicly in the classrooms or to criticize the atheists' assertions.

The persecution of religion is increasingly destroying the government's authority, because everybody is beginning to see clearly that it is not conducted on the initiative of individual atheists, but because of pressure from the Party and the Soviet government. Has not the time come to put an end to the discrimination against believers, in order to narrow the gulf between the Communist Party and the community of religious believers?

Finally, we quote from the Lithuanian Catholic Chronicle No. 2 about events in a Lithuanian school:

On 17 December 1971, Bezusparis, the investigator of Zarasai district Procurator's Office, and the police lieutenant Bagdonavicius came to Avilia Eight-Year School during lesson-time. In the staffroom the following children were interrogated one by one, because they were prepared for First Communion in the summer of 1971: Bakutis, Razmanaviciute and the two Jezerskaite sisters. The children were asked: Did the priest teach you? How long did he teach? What did he teach? Did the priest give you a catechism? Did he give you a prayer book? What did the priest talk about? The children were questioned for about an hour each; before they were released they had to sign a protocol that had been written up beforehand. When he returned to class, Bakutis cried through the whole lesson. . . .

On 20 December the mothers went to the Procurator's office to make their protest; they demanded that the children should not be questioned without the parents being there, since the children would write whatever the investigator told them because they were afraid. The women presented the Procurator with a written protest. Later the Procurator and the investigator questioned all of them. At the very time that the women were being questioned in the Procurator's office, the children, who were being watched by the teachers so they would not run away, were again being questioned because they had gone to First Communion.

Several of the mothers, whose children had not returned home, hurried to the school. Forcing their way into the office, they found their children being interrogated. One police officer and one teacher were still in the room. A tape

recorder was hidden under the table. Complaining that their children were being questioned without the mothers being present, and that they had been given no food all day, the mothers gathered their children and took them home. At that point, the children who had not been questioned were also released.

4. *A Moscow Sermon*

Towards the end of 1972, news reached the West that Fr. Vsevolod Shpiller of St. Nicholas-in-Kuznetsy, and Fr. Dudko – both Russian Orthodox priests in Moscow and well-known for their pastoral ministry especially among young people and intellectuals – had been dismissed from their churches. The news was contained in the final number of the Chronicle of Current Events, the Soviet human rights journal suppressed by the police in late 1972. A few weeks later, however, a Russian Orthodox émigré, recently arrived, reported that the two priests were still serving in their churches. The CSRC ensured that corrected reports appeared in Church Times, Baptist Times and Church of England Newspaper.

The Chronicle mentioned that at the time of this trouble Fr. Dudko preached a sermon to his parishioners, appealing for their support. The sermon is printed below.

SERMON BY FR. DIMITRI DUDKO OF THE MOSCOW CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS ON PREOBRAZHENKA (*Vestnik RSKhD*, No. 106, 1972, pp. 339-340)¹

I greet you all this Sunday! I greet you all on the day when we remember Christ's Resurrection.

In order to experience this day to the full, in order to attain it on the eternal day of the Kingdom of God, we have to endure much. Many obstacles stand on our path. But inasmuch as we have believed in Christ, we must follow Him through any obstacles, wherever He leads us. Whoever looks back is unworthy.

It is especially difficult for us at times when misfortunes overtake us – the raging elements, times of war. There are probably still many who remember the last war for our Fatherland, when countless fascist hordes fell upon our country, trampled her, destroyed our material and spiritual values, shot and tortured law-abiding citizens.

The Church never stands aside . . . From this place, from which I have just greeted you on the day of Christ's Resurrection, people were exhorted to rally round and help those suffering at the front.

There are other difficulties, perhaps as great as times of war – pervasive sin, when vice, like rust or vermin, is corrupting our families and morally crippling the rising generation, when moral standards are disintegrating, when drunkenness, hooliganism and murder are increasing, when spiritual and material values are being destroyed – values which our ancestors have built up over centuries. Many of our newspapers and magazines have begun to scream – literally to scream – about this and the Government is issuing special decrees. In such times it is more necessary than ever before to proclaim the truth from this place (lit. *amvon* – raised area in front of the iconostasis).

¹ This journal, published by the Russian Student Christian Movement in Paris, urgently needs new subscribers. The Russian or French version can be ordered by British readers through the CSRC.