

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

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is considered practically all over the world to be an inspiring document of great spiritual and moral strength. Disrespect for human rights does not just bring suffering on individuals and groups within their respective societies, but it also threatens the international community as a whole. As this is increasingly realized, it binds the individual citizens, social institutions as well as governments to respect these principles and to work persistently towards their implementation.

Freedom of conviction, thought, conscience, religion and faith, together with all other liberties and rights of man should be an object of attention and respect, not because they represent a privileged claim of some citizens (e.g. religious freedom), but simply because without them society cannot become truly human. It is for this reason that neither individuals nor States can claim any right to obstruct the expression of freedom of thought, conviction and conscience. On the contrary, it is their task and duty to contribute to the full realization of everybody's freedom. Human beings should develop freely and should apply their freedom creatively according to their choice, actively participating in the political life of their country, in the administration of the State and in the economic and cultural development of society.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights declares the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion in Art. 18. It declares freedom "to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas of any kind regardless of borders, whether oral, written or printed, through art or any other means according to one's own choice". (Art. 19, para. 1, 2). In the light of these principles, all obstacles which hinder the implementation of these rights should be removed.

It is of the utmost importance that believers and non-believers alike should be able to express their opinions, even if these should differ from the official ones, without fear of reprisals. Besides Art. 25 of the above mentioned Covenant which provides for equality of conditions for those entering public employment, it is also necessary to resolutely respect Art. 20 of our Constitution, according to

which "the society of working people assures the equality of citizens by the creation of equal possibilities as well as opportunities in all areas of the life of society".

Irreconcilable with this is the tendency common during the processing of employment applications and other administrative procedures to put pressure on people to "abandon their outmoded religious views". Although a man's religious denomination has been omitted from official documents for more than 20 years, it is known that in many instances it nevertheless plays an important part in the evaluation of people. It is necessary to ensure that believers and non-believers have equal opportunity to become teachers, professors, scientific workers, civil servants, employees in the courts and the offices of the prosecutor and in other institutions without having to hide their convictions. Ability and moral qualities should be the only criteria in deciding a person's suitability for a job.

The general state of affairs will be helped if the right to freedom of expression is not restricted, as for example in the case of believers, to merely passive attendance at available religious services. Believers should have the right to freely exercise and develop their spiritual and religious life, to realize their aspirations in keeping with their traditions and in the light of newly acquired knowledge, without outside interference. At the same time, they should be allowed without hindrance to publicly submit proposals, to freely discuss and proclaim their views and to publish them in the religious and secular press. A Christian or a Jewish artist, teacher, scientist, philosopher, theologian or publicist has the right to take part in the cultural life of his country in the same way as a person who is an active adherent of Marxism-Leninism. Both of them, and naturally others, who for example adhere to humanist, democratic and atheist traditions should have the opportunity to discuss their views in the mass media to the benefit of the whole of society. It is irreconcilable with the principles of the right to freedom of conscience, thought and expression if certain occupations (e.g. teaching) are entrusted only to people who declare on oath that they adhere to the

ideology of the ruling political power. To this our history bears ample witness. This is also why the ideal to proclaim freely one's faith was enunciated here at the time of the Hussites and before other nations in Europe.

The right to freedom of expression includes the right to receive ideas and inspiration regardless of frontiers. This right is infringed if people are prevented from obtaining philosophical, theological, religious and other literature from abroad and if they are precluded from freely disseminating ideas, articles, essays and other works across the boundaries. It is time to stop the disastrous practice of curtailing by all available means the opportunity of obtaining undistorted information and ideas about Christianity and other religions. It is wrong that the dissemination of religious and other literature and even the Bible should be considered practically a punishable offence and an anti-state act. (For example, it is absolutely forbidden to read the scriptures in prisons.)

The state of religious instruction and the education of the young poses a special problem. The current practice should be brought into line with the principles embodied in both international Covenants and in the Agreement on the Prevention of Educational Discrimination. Education should be made available to all without any form of discrimination. Only the ability and talent of the applicant should be taken into consideration. In both Covenants (Art. 13 of Covenant 1 and Art. 19 of Covenant 2) States which are a party to them undertake to respect the right of parents and guardians to guarantee religious and moral education of their children according to their own convictions. If this education takes place partly in school, it is the duty of the State to ensure that this right is effectively carried out by removing all obstacles, i.e. pressure exerted on parents by school and other authorities not to send their children to religious classes; to spare children ridicule because of their faith and their parents' faith; and to ensure that they do not suffer discrimination because of their belief. The Church and families should impart religious instruction in their customary way regardless of age.

Our Constitution and both International Covenants (Art. 28, Art. 21 of Covenant 1 and Art. 22 of Covenant 2) proclaim the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. These freedoms provide for the right to associate with others and to create organizations to implement such freedoms, as well as to assemble with others not only in designated places but also in public places, in the open air etc. In practical terms this means that the State recognizes the right of Churches and religious societies to hold congresses and meetings of all kinds in church and other buildings at which questions of common interest can be discussed, ideas freely exchanged and thereby the community strengthened. To this end, there should also be special courses and seminars for believers, conferences of laymen and clergy, youth conventions and gatherings, work parties, trips and extended stays for recreational and study purposes. Various church organizations, societies and associations, as regards extensive ecumenical contact among the members of different Churches, have an important role to play. This applies equally to the monastic orders which have been an integral part of the Catholic and Orthodox Church for thousands of years. The freedom of the Church and religious communities to seek ties with fraternal communities abroad is an inalienable part of the right of association and assembly. This includes exchanges among students and teachers of theological colleges, contacts between individuals and representatives of Churches at various levels for purposes of friendship and study. Lively contacts among Christians across boundaries of nations and States, and mutually fruitful exchanges among various traditions and movements will have a positive influence on the life of the whole of society. The existence of these is specifically implied in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference (in the chapter concerning cooperation on humanitarian matters).

Last but not least is the question of the social welfare of the clergy and their status vis-à-vis the Labour Law. There must be full application of the principle explicitly proclaimed by law No. 218 (1949), namely that the clergy



Above: Jiří Hájek, signatory and spokesman for Charter 77. "Document No. 9", printed on pp. 158-161, is signed by him.



Above right: The Slovak bishop, Jan Korec (see p. 152) who has been prevented from exercising his ministry and is working as a manual labourer.

Right: Justinian Marina, the late Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (see article pp. 164-169).

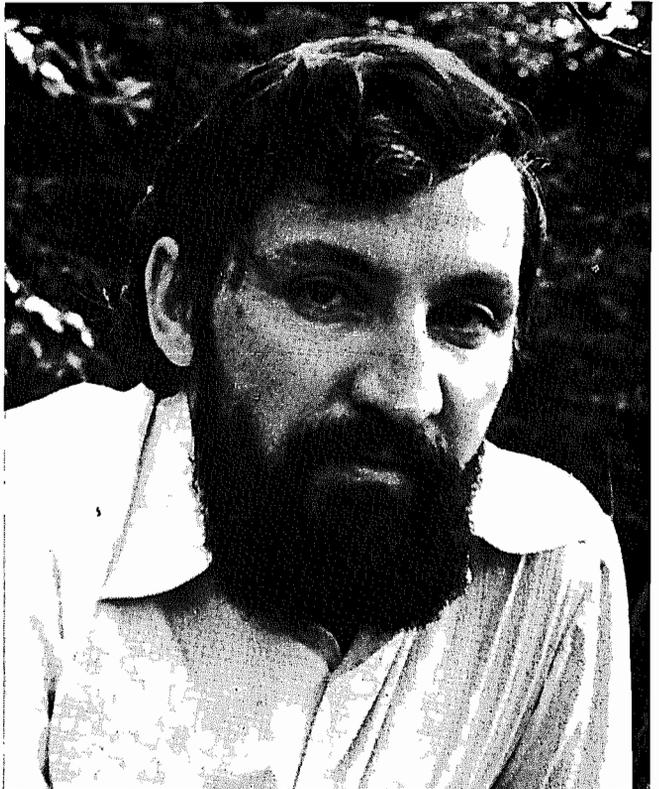


Below: Participants of the enlarged Plenum of the AUCECB held in Moscow on 9-11 February 1977 (see document pp. 184-186).





Fr. Gleb Yakunin, a Russian Orthodox priest, who is campaigning for greater religious freedom in the USSR. He is attacked in a Soviet press article printed on pp. 186-191.



Lev Regelson, Russian Orthodox layman, who has supported Fr. Yakunin in his campaign. He is the author of a book recently published in the West, *The Tragedy of the Russian Church* (in Russian). See the document pp. 186-191.

are employees of the Church and are authorized by it to carry out their mission. The situation will be better served if the clergy are permitted to do their job without the gross interference of the state organs which often, without grounds, refuse them permission to carry out their ecclesiastical duties. As the labour legislation of 1949, which is still in force, is wholly inadequate, it is necessary to implement, particularly as regards clerical and church practice, the official Labour Law. In para. 268 such application is in fact specifically stipulated.

One must be wary also of unwarranted interference in the way entrance examinations to the theological colleges are conducted. The needs of the believers, and the interest and personal merit of the applicant should be the only criteria.

This document is introduced by a quotation from an outstanding figure in

cultural and intellectual history. His spirit is a living testimony to the fact that all these freedoms constitute an integral part of our historical heritage and that their importance in the life of every individual, as well as the whole of society, is crucial. It would be tragic if inalienable freedoms and human rights were to be regarded as something that could be expediently subordinated to political or ideological aims. We continue to hope and believe that our social system has the capacity to ensure that these human rights and freedoms are not only recognized, but also realized through popular initiative, in a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation.

Prof. Dr. Jirí Hájek, Dr. Sc.
Spokesman for Charter 77

Prague,
22 April 1977

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Czech Clergy and Charter 77

Charter 77 was signed by a number of clergy, who also wrote an open letter last January entitled "Our Attitude to the Statements of Charter 77". The text of this open letter is printed below. In it the signatories explain why they signed the Charter.

Wherever man is freeing himself from oppression, exploitation, from social and spiritual destitution, from the slavery of fear and superstition, wherever dams are being built against human pride and the perverse lust of the double-dealing human heart, wherever the humiliated are raised up, there we can see the reflection of God's redeeming might, which overcomes the powers of nothingness and sin and delivers us from them.

Charter 77 is derived from important documents (the UN Charter, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and from both the well-known covenants, which have come into legal force in our country. We are convinced that

the Charter is a well-thought out criticism of injustices committed against the powerless and a response to the lamentations of the sorrowing, the afflicted and the oppressed (Exodus 3). Charter 77 is imbued with a spirit of solidarity with the oppressed and with a determination to rectify injustice.

The question of human rights and their formulation in the above-mentioned documents has grown from spiritual roots which go back to the Reformation and the non-conformist movement in the Anglo-Saxon world. These subjects are very close to us, together with the emphasis of our Reformation on the free preaching of God's Word and the idea of religious tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others:

We believe that, in part, this is even a revival of the prophetic struggle against evil. Positive notes resound in the *Charter*: its aim is to improve society; it calls for a dialogue with the political powers even at the cost of lack of understanding, risks and sacrifices.