

# Chronicle

## Summaries of Events and Background Information

### Requiescant in Pace

*During the ten years that RCL has been chronicling the situation of believers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe many of them have died. We list below some of those known to Keston College, ordered according to date of death. The brief descriptions of the lives of believers who have died during this period reflect the many different aspects of religious life in the communist countries and the wide range of contributions which many individuals have been able to make to it. Sadly,*

*Ostapenko, Ivan Moisevevich (?-1974)*

Baptist, USSR

The presbyter of Shevchenko Evangelical-Christian Baptist congregation, Ostapenko was serving a three-year exile term, following a four-year prison sentence under Articles 209 and 138 (Ukrainian Code). He had been given the opportunity to serve his exile nearer his home on the condition that he renounced his beliefs, which he refused to do. On 26 January 1974 he was found hanged in the basement of a house; his family, refusing to believe the official verdict of suicide, wrote a letter of protest to Brezhnev. (*Keston News Service* [KNS] 22.)

*Trochta, Cardinal Stepan (1905-1974)*

Roman Catholic, Czechoslovakia

Trochta, ordained in 1932, was Bishop of Litomerice from 1948. He had spent the war years in prison, and in 1951 was arrested once more, to be sentenced in 1954 to 25 years' hard labour. Trochta was rehabilitated under Dubček, and was made Cardinal *in pectore* in 1969; until 1973 he was the only resident bishop in the country. On 5 April 1974 the Cardinal, already in a poor state of health, was subjected to "brutal and lengthy interro-

*it also reflects the high price which too often has to be paid for an unswerving commitment to the faith: many of those whose names appear below died in circumstances strongly suggesting that they were murdered or driven to suicide with the connivance of state officials. The list does not include prominent churchmen who died of natural causes during the period covered, and whose achievements have been commemorated in RCL and elsewhere.*

gation" and on the following day he died after a cerebral haemorrhage. Because he was seen as a martyr by Czech Catholics the authorities took steps to prevent the public from attending his funeral. He had no successor in Litomerice. (*RCL* Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 54.)

*Dandaron, Bidiya (1914-1974)*

Buddhist, USSR

Dandaron, a revered Buddhist leader, spent over 22 years in labour camps. He was imprisoned from 1937 to 1955, but was rehabilitated under Khrushchev; then in 1972 he was accused of having organised, with others, a "secret Buddhist sect". He was sentenced to five years, and died in labour camp at Vyd-rino while serving his term. Many of his friends believe that his death was caused by the harsh treatment he received in the camp. (*RCL* Vol. 1, Nos 4-5, pp. 43-7; Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 7; Vol. 3, Nos. 1-3, p. 39; Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 14-15.)

*Lutsky, Fr Mikhailo (?-1975)*

Uniate, USSR

Fr Lutsky was found dead in a wood near Lvov, in the Drogobych district of Ukraine. Reports claimed that he was murdered by the

secret police, but the authorities insisted that he had committed suicide.

*Biblenko, Ivan Vasilievich (1928-1975)*

Baptist, USSR

Biblenko was a leader and preacher from Krivoi Rog who had served a three-year term in strict régime camp under a sentence received in 1972. On 13 September 1975 he set off to a church meeting in Dnepropetrovsk, and failed to return. His family, after extensive and fruitless enquiries, were finally informed of his death in hospital on 24 September, allegedly due to injuries sustained in a road accident. Accounts given of the "accident" were not satisfactory, and after examining his body his relatives were convinced that "he died as a result of torture". (*KNS* No. 20.)

*Tamonis, Mindaugas (1941-1975)*

Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

A talented young engineering expert and poet, active in the Lithuanian Catholic nationalist movement, Mindaugas committed suicide by throwing himself under a train, at the age of 34. He had been "treated" with depressant drugs in Vilnius psychiatric hospital (part of the diagnosis was a 564-point questionnaire on his religious beliefs) because he had refused to restore a monument to the Red Army, and had written to the Central Committee of the Communist Party calling for a referendum to re-establish the Lithuanian national State where Christians would be able to vote for a party representing their interests. In an obituary to Tamonis the editors of the unofficial *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* called him one of the "moral giants" of Lithuania. (*RCL* Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 81-2.)

*Brüsewitz, Oscar (1929-1976)*

Lutheran, GDR

On 18 August 1976 Pastor Brüsewitz set fire to himself in Zeitz, East Germany, in protest against the atheistic pressure on young people (including his own children) and against the weakness of the church leadership's attitude toward the régime. The authorities declared that he was mentally ill; however the Church responded with a statement that the pastor had served his congregation with the utmost zeal, paying particular attention to work among the young. (*RCL* Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 59; Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 126; Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 98).

*Deinega, Nikolai Yakovlevich (1923-1976)*

Reform Baptist, USSR

Nikolai Deinega's family had suffered persecution for their openly-professed beliefs for several years before his death in mysterious circumstances at the age of 53. He was found unconscious at a bus stop in Kalichovka (Chernigov district, Ukraine) after being severely injured in an attack by unknown persons. He died shortly afterwards of a brain haemorrhage but no attempt was made by the authorities to investigate the case; his wife suspected two officials who, she claimed, had often threatened that her husband would not die a natural death. (*KNS* No. 33.)

*Ivanova, Raisa (1929-1977)*

True Orthodox, USSR

Sentenced for belonging to the True Orthodox "sect", Ivanova refused to work in the Mordovian camp in which she was interned. In October 1974 she was declared mentally ill and transferred to Kazan Special Psychiatric Hospital where she suffered severely from the intensive treatment she received. At the end of 1977 she hanged herself.

*Yermogen, Archbishop Golubev (1895-1978)*

Russian Orthodox, USSR

A respected figure in the Orthodox Church, Archbishop Yermogen of Kaluga had spent 14 years (1931-45) in labour camp. In 1965 he headed a delegation of eight bishops to the Patriarch criticising the decisions of the 1961 Council of Bishops, which had in effect taken power over parish life away from the Church. His compulsory retirement to the monastery of the Dormition at Zhirovitzy in Belorussia amounted to virtual house arrest. (*RCL* Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 31; Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 128; Vol. 9, Nos. 3-4, pp. 101-2.)

*Sedletsky, Viktor (1958-1978)*

Baptist, USSR

Viktor, the 20-year-old son of the regional superintendent of the Baptist Church in the Chernovtsy region, died tragically under suspicious circumstances while a conscript in the Soviet army. His body was returned to his family on 28 July in a sealed coffin, and they were told that he had drowned while swimming in the sea in stormy conditions. However when his mother insisted upon the coffin being opened it was found that his body had been badly mutilated. The authorities went to some lengths to deny that Sedletsky had been

murdered (e.g. a substantial article was published in *Nauka i Religiya*).

*Starets Tavrion (1898-1978)*

Russian Orthodox, USSR

Born Tikhon Danilovich Batozsky, *starets* (elder) Tavrion spent 28 years (1928-1956) in camps and exile. In 1957 he was made abbot of the Glinsk Hermitage, but this was closed a year later and he spent the next eight years serving in various dioceses. In 1968 he replaced *starets* Kosma as spiritual father of the Hermitage of the Transfiguration near Riga. Thousands of pilgrims came there from all parts of Russia to hear his spiritual teachings. Tavrion died, after many months suffering from cancer, at the age of 80. (RCL Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 91; Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 96-100.)

*Kalienuk, Zenon Adamovich (1887-1979)*

Uniate, USSR

Kalienuk, Dean of the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church, was arrested in 1946 and sentenced to long-term imprisonment for refusing to change his faith to that of the (officially-sanctioned) Russian Orthodox Church. He was again arrested in 1974 for demanding the re-establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and suffered continual persecution until his death in the spring of 1979.

*Coba, Bishop Ernesto (?-1979)*

Roman Catholic, Albania

Coba was the Apostolic Administrator of Shkodra but was confined in a labour camp near the city of Elbasan in 1974. In 1979 he was discovered celebrating Easter Mass with other prisoners in the camp and was severely beaten. The elderly prelate sustained serious injuries and was found dead the next day; relatives were told, however, that he had died from "natural causes". (RCL Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2, p. 66.)

*Gono, Milan (?-1979)*

Roman Catholic, Czechoslovakia

Milan Gono (Father Philip) was secretly ordained by Cardinal Trochta (see above). He was arrested in March 1979 and although charges of "theft of socialist property" and "sexual misconduct" could not be substantiated, Gono was forced to admit his priestly activities and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "obstructing state supervision of the Church" (art. 178). He died in prison on 20 or 21 July. The official declaration that he had been killed after falling from some

scaffolding was called into doubt by the statements of a doctor who said that Gono was dead before the time of the alleged fall, and the warder held responsible for the priest's death, who claimed that Gono had died under interrogation during which the authorities had tried to force him to divulge the names of other secretly-ordained priests. (RCL Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 144.)

*Krasnova, Tatyana Karpovna (1903-1979)*

True Orthodox Church, USSR

Tatyana Karpovna died at the age of 76 while serving the sixth year of a sentence, under article 70, of nine years' imprisonment and three years' exile. This was her second prison term: she had already served one in Kengir from which she was released in 1955.

*Matulaitis-Labuckas, Bishop Josef*

(1896-1979)

Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

Bishop Josef was the Apostolic Administrator of Kaunas, and the senior Catholic prelate in Lithuania. He was known for his support of priests harassed by the authorities and for his defence of churches against the growing problem of burglary and desecration. He resisted pressure from the authorities to denounce the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*. (RCL Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 8.)

*Jaugelis, Fr Virgilyus (1948-1980)*

Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

A prominent religious dissenter, Jaugelis was known for his part in producing and distributing the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, for which he was sentenced to two years' strict-regime camp in 1974. He had also collected signatures for the 1972 petition condemning the oppression of the Church in Lithuania. After his release he studied theology privately and was consecrated as a priest in 1978. A year later he was signatory to a letter from 92 priests of the Vilkauskis diocese, supporting the Catholic Committee and protesting against Soviet anti-religious discrimination. Jaugelis had been suffering from the cancer which finally killed him since before the time of his trial in 1974, and an operation in 1975 had left him disabled. (KNS No. 95.)

*Shelkov, Vladimir Andreyevich (1896-1980)*

Seventh-Day Adventist, USSR

Shelkov, who became the leader of True and

Free Seventh-Day Adventists in 1954, embodied the courageously uncompromising conviction of this group that it is contrary to the Christian conscience to profess loyalty to the atheist state or to submit to state registration. He spent 20 years of his life in prisons and camps. In 1969 he founded the unofficial Adventist publishing house "True Witness" through which he produced many works on the question of the state and religion, including an eight-book series under the title "The Just War for Freedom of Conscience against the Dictatorship of State Atheism". Shelkov was last arrested on 14 March 1979, and sentenced to five years' strict-regime labour camp—the sentence produced a wave of protests both in the USSR and in the West, but Shelkov died in the camp, aged 84. (*RCL* Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 61; Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 88-93; Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 129-30; Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 201-217.)

*Gurgula, Fr Anatoli (1906-1980)*  
Uniate, USSR

Fr Gurgula had been secretly serving as pastor to the Ukrainian Catholics in his area despite the authorities' threats and attempts to make him change his faith to Russian Orthodoxy. On 27 February 1980 the bodies of the 74-year-old priest and his wife were found burned to death in their home in the village of Tomshivtsy in the Kalush region. It was suspected, but not verified, that they had been murdered.

*Kotyk, Fr Yevhen (191?-1980)*  
Uniate, USSR

Fr Kotyk's body, bearing traces of torture, was found near the village of Zymna Voda, in the Lvov region of West Ukraine. His funeral on 10 May 1980 was attended by a large crowd of faithful. (*KNS* No. 106.)

*Luli, Fr Ndoc*  
Roman Catholic, Albania

Luli was director of the Xavier College in Shkodra at the time of the Communist take-over in 1944. Two years later when the Jesuit Order was outlawed he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years' hard labour. In May 1980 he was re-arrested and publicly tried when the authorities discovered that he had baptised his twin nephews. He was sentenced to "life imprisonment until death" and as his family have been unable to locate him since that time it is strongly suspected that he has been killed. (*KNS* No. 142.)

*Zaks, Iliya (1914-1980)*  
Jew, USSR

Zaks, a Jewish "refusenik", died in Tashkent at the age of 66. In 1979 his family had been permitted to emigrate, but Zaks himself was in prison, having been sentenced to two years for baking and selling matzo. (This sentence was later suspended, but Zaks was still unable to leave the USSR.)

*Šapoka, Fr Leonas (?-1980)*  
Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

On the night of 10-11 October 1980 a group of men broke into the priest's house, and in the morning he was found dead on the floor by parishioners; his body showed signs of torture. The murder occurred shortly after two articles had been published in the daily newspaper *Tiesa* attacking Fr Šapoka. The murderers have since been tried. (*RCL* Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 191.)

*Bakholdin, Semyon (1929-1980)*  
Seventh-Day Adventist, USSR

A member of the True and Free Seventh-Day Adventist Group led by Shelkov (*see above*), and also involved, with Shelkov, in the Adventist Group for Legal Struggle, Bakholdin was arrested in 1978 and sentenced to seven years' special-regime camp to be followed by three years' exile. (He was accused of trying to avoid military service by means of bribery.) He lost the use of his legs due to being confined in damp prison cells, and died during the second year of his imprisonment, aged 51. Since relatives were unable, despite repeated attempts, to have access to his body, it was suspected that his death was not entirely from natural causes.

*Coufal, Fr Přemysl (?-1981)*  
Roman Catholic, Czechoslovakia

Fr Coufal had been continually harassed by the secret police since they discovered his activities as a secret priest. In January 1981 he was given until 23 February to decide whether he would agree to cooperate with them, and on 24 February his body was found in his flat by friends. The official explanation was that Coufal had committed suicide by gas poisoning, but on examining his body, the priest's friends found that his head had been severely wounded. (*RCL* Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 48-9.)

*Drachyov, Fr Pavel Yustinovich (1888-1981)*  
Russian Orthodox, USSR

Fr Drachyov, who died at the age of 92, was the last surviving monk from the Optina

Pustyn community, which he entered in 1908. (In 1923 the monastery was closed and the 300 monks banished.) He was ordained hierodeacon in 1927, and later became presbyter to Bishop Pitrim of Kaluga. Fr Pavel was known for his spirituality, simplicity and devotion, and spent his life teaching his spiritual children in the old tradition of prayer, one of the great ministries of the *starsy* (elders) of Optina.

*Tsachev, Nathaniel Vasil (192?-1981)*

Pentecostal, Bulgaria

Tsachev died while serving a four-year sentence on charges relating to foreign currency found in his possession (which he had received from missions) and to his activities distributing Bibles and other religious literature. He had been sentenced on 25 September 1979, together with four other Pentecostals.

*Teodosiu, Sabin (1952-1981)*

Baptist, Romania

Teodosiu was a lay preacher; in 1979 his application to Bucharest Theological Seminary was turned down because he refused to give a statement against his brother, a member of the Romanian Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. Sabin died on 2 June 1981 while working on electronic transformers on a high-tension installation; he was electrocuted and fell from the ladder on which he was working. According to a document issued by his family there was some delay in taking him to hospital, and moreover he had not been provided with the necessary protective equipment. They feel therefore that he died under suspicious circumstances. (KNS No. 132.)

*Mažeika, Fr Leonas (1918-1981)*

Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

Fr Mazeika, the pastor of Pamusis, was involved in the Roman Catholic Lithuanian nationalist movement: in 1979 he was one of the 118 priests of the Panavežys diocese who signed a letter to the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR in support of a statement by the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights calling for the revoking of the Law on Religious Associations which infringed believers' rights. On the night of 8 August 1981 he was fatally wounded by unknown assailants in his rectory; he died on the way to hospital. His murderers were eventually brought to trial after protests by believers. (RCL, this issue, p. 79.)

*Druck, Vasili (?-1981)*

Baptist, USSR

Vasili Druck was stabbed to death in August 1981 while a conscript in the Soviet army. Circumstantial evidence given by his family indicated that he was murdered, and in fact Vasili had informed them in a letter, that "a sergeant wants to kill me". Although he was held in high regard by superior officers and was known as a non-drinker the authorities claimed that Vasili had, while drunk, provoked the fatal attack. The court accepted this presentation of the events and did not call any of Vasili's fellow-soldiers as witnesses, even though some had been present when he died. (KNS No. 152.)

*Kernweisz, Monsignor Konrad (1913-1981)*

Roman Catholic, Romania

Monsignor Kernweisz had secretly served as a substitute bishop in the diocese of Timișoara since 1954 when Bishop Augustin Pacha was imprisoned. He was appointed secretly in line with Vatican policy not to announce some appointments of bishops in countries hostile to the Church.

*Švanda, Pavel (1959-1981)*

Roman Catholic, Czechoslovakia

A 22-year-old student of architecture from Brno, Svanda had been active in the underground church since returning to Czechoslovakia from a visit to his uncle (Fr Spidlik, a renowned Catholic professor) in Rome. He gave talks about his journey and helped to re-type some Catholic documents. He was last seen alive on 1 October 1981. Nine days later his body was found in the Machoga Gorge in a place where it seemed improbable that he could have fallen. His relatives were not allowed to be present at the post-mortem, nor was any statement issued about the inquest. (KNS No. 139.)

*Laurinavičius, Fr Bronius (?-1981)*

Roman Catholic, Lithuania (USSR)

Fr Laurinavičius, the pastor of Adutiškis, was active in the Catholic patriotic movement, in the Lithuanian temperance movement, and the Lithuanian Helsinki Monitoring Group. Since the 1960s he had signed numerous declarations to the Soviet authorities protesting against state interference in church affairs. He was attacked several times in the Soviet press, and it was only a few days after one such attack that he died of injuries received when he was run over by a lorry in Vilnius. Two independent witnesses asserted that he

was pushed into the path of the lorry, and the authors of the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* claimed that the KGB were responsible for his death (which left only one member of the Lithuanian Helsinki group at large).

*Clipa, Ioan (?-1981)*

Baptist, Romania

Clipa was interrogated in 1980 because he had distributed Bibles. Persecution and pressure by the security police left his nervous health in a ruined state, and after being arrested at the beginning of 1981 he had a breakdown and committed suicide. (*RCL* Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 221.)

*Manzinger, Monsignor (190?-1982)*

Jesuit, USSR

Manzinger, in his seventies, was the parish priest of Soly; with his death the number of Catholic priests in Belorussia, where there are 2.5 million Catholics, dropped to 48.

*Khrapov, Nikolai Petrovich (1914-1982)*

Reform Baptist, USSR

Khrapov died at the age of 68 following a heart attack in a labour camp near Shevchenko in the Mangyshlak region of Kazakhstan. He had been an outspoken evangelist in the unregistered Evangelical Christian and Baptist churches since 1971, and spent a total of 28 years in prison camp and exile. In the camps he brought many fellow-prisoners to faith, the best-known of whom was the former criminal Vasili Kozlov.

*Bárta, Fr Josef (1921-1982)*

Roman Catholic, Czechoslovakia

Fr Barta was arrested in November 1980 and sentenced in April 1982 to 15 months' suspended sentence for "obstructing state supervision of the Church", accused of organising a clandestine theological seminary in Liberec, North Bohemia. Fr Barta had suffered two heart attacks and a third killed him in prison at the age of 61.

*Compiled by Carolyn Burch*

## A Catholic Gain in Lithuania

The consecration and enthronement of two Catholic bishops in Lithuania, the only Soviet republic with a largely Catholic population, in July and August this year is described in the unofficial *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* (No. 54) and marks a significant gain for the Catholic Church in this part of the Soviet Union.

Both bishops — Antanas Vaičius and Vincentas Sladkevičius — were appointed to their dioceses by Pope John Paul II at the beginning of July, with the consent of the Soviet authorities. Fr Vaičius, administrator of Telšiai diocese since 1975, was consecrated as its bishop on 24 July in Kaunas Cathedral, in the presence of all the other four Lithuanian bishops. Two weeks later Bishop Sladkevičius entered his diocesan cathedral of Kaišiadorys. He did not need to be consecrated — he had already been a bishop for 25 years. Secretly consecrated by Bishop Matulionis of Kaišiadorys in 1957, when the Church feared the Soviet authorities would never permit new Catholic bishops to be appointed, he was exiled to a small village outside his own diocese in 1959. He owes his return, at least in

part, to the campaign of petitions and appeals directed at the secular authorities by Lithuanian priests and believers over the last ten years. These petitions have often been published in the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* and the editors describe the Bishop's release from exile as "one of the greatest victories" of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

Early on the morning of 8 August, Bishop Sladkevičius set out for Kaišiadorys, but first had to visit the village church in his place of exile, Pabirže, to bid farewell to the assembled villagers. Along the road to Kaišiadorys hundreds of Catholics from the neighbouring parishes had also gathered to wave good-bye. (The priests of these parishes were later summoned by the local authorities to account for the "demonstrations".)

In Kaišiadorys, the authorities had allowed people to assemble only inside the cathedral precincts, but here a very large crowd had gathered, bearing flowers. At 12.30 the cathedral bells began to ring out and Bishop Sladkevičius's car arrived. The crowd soon covered his car and the ground all around