

matusok Lapja assures its subscribers that “the Great October Socialist Revolution has brought about a change of decisive significance in the history of the human family.” The Lutheran weekly *Evangelikus Élet* (6 November 1983) propounds the thesis that the application of the principles of the Bolshevik seizure of power provide the only solution to the problems of peace and justice: “The revolutionaries fought for peace and justice in one of the greatest countries in the world. They chose peace and

justice as the rule with regard to their relations with other people and with humanity. Subsequently generations adopted these principles for themselves, and to the present day they remain the sole viable way for the whole world.” *Evangelikus Élet* also notes that “the voice echoes ever more strongly of those Churches and Christians who are today prepared to collaborate with anyone who recognises the sole viable way to the future.”

Measures Against Catholics in Southern Vietnam

The following report on the circumstances surrounding the arrest of thirteen Catholics in southern Vietnam is taken from information provided in late 1983 by Mr Dominic Nguyen Duy Cuong, a former Jesuit novice who was living in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) until March 1981. Mr Cuong witnessed the arrest of seven Jesuits and the confiscation of the Dac Lo Centre and the Jesuit Regional Residence.

At the end of June 1983, sentences ranging from life imprisonment to an “admonishment” were imposed on thirteen Catholics in Vietnam. All thirteen had been involved in, or associated with, the work at the Jesuit Dac Lo Centre in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). The Jesuits receiving the harshest sentences were Fr Doan SJ, the Regional Superior in Vietnam, Fr Chinh SJ, his assistant, Fr Que SJ, the editor of a religious magazine, and Professor Lai SJ, a linguistics expert; the Catholic sentenced to life imprisonment was Nguyen Van Hien, an ex-Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army of South Vietnam and a lay helper at the Dac Lo Centre.

Before the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the Dac Lo Centre at 161 Ly Chinh Thang, Ho Chi Minh City, housed extensive Jesuit activities. It comprised a television centre, a student centre, a library with 30,000 books, a chapel (seating 200) and a four-storey residential building. After 1975, the TV centre was confiscated and the student centre closed, and Fr Joseph Nguyen Cong Doan was forced to hand over his Regional Residence (at 105 Nguyen Dinh Chieu) to the government. In exchange he was given a small house, located next door to a police station. His assistant, Fr Joseph Do Quang Chinh,

also moved to this new residence, at 142 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, Phu Nhuan, Ho Chi Minh City.

The steps taken to curtail the activities at the Dac Lo Centre, however, appeared to have quite the opposite effect. The parish began to attract large numbers of people, especially among the young, and its activities expanded to the extent that even with seven masses each weekday and twelve on Sundays the chapel could not accommodate all who wished to attend, and some had to stand outside. There were eight choirs for holy services. The Centre also produced a religious magazine, *Dao Nhap The* (Incarnate Religion) which was published at irregular intervals and distributed free of charge to parishioners.

The first arrests at the Jesuit Centre took place at the end of 1980. On 8 December, at about 9.30 a.m., police appeared and arrested Fr Joseph Le Than Que SJ and Mr Nguyen Van Hien, who were later taken to Chi Hoa Prison. The Centre was blockaded and searched; the Jesuits and some 38 parishioners who were staying at the Centre making preparations for Christmas were all questioned. The lay people were then released, as was the Regional Superior, Fr Doan, who had been staying at Dac Lo. Four Jesuits, Frs Linh, Quy, Trung and Lai, were however confined in a small room in the Centre for two weeks, after which they were taken to the Police HQ where they were to be held until June 1983 when they were tried and sentenced. At the time of the arrests in December 1980, the remaining premises at Dac Lo — the chapel, library and residential building — were confiscated by the authorities.

On 22 January 1981 Fr Doan was arrested at the Regional Residence. Searching his room, the police found an ordinary 8-band radio set which they claimed Fr Doan had been using as a broadcasting station to communicate overseas. They also found a copy of an important Communist Party document, intended only for internal circulation among high-ranking CP cadres, which stated: "We [Communist cadres] must exterminate the Roman Catholic Church, principally bishops and priests, but first of all we must point our sword directly at Jesuit gangs because they are the biggest, most intelligent, richest and strongest. The most dangerous CIA elements are in their Order." Fr Doan was intensively questioned as to how this document had come into his possession. After he had been taken away to prison, his assistant Fr Chinh SJ, two students and a Jesuit novice were detained in the Residence for a month; Fr Chinh was then summoned to Police Headquarters for lengthy interrogation on the functions and activities of Vietnamese Jesuits in Vietnam and overseas. He was then kept under house arrest in the Regional Residence until 22 June 1981 when he was imprisoned in the Police Headquarters and held there until the trials in June 1983.

On 30 June and 1 July 1983, the newspaper *Saigon Giai Phong* carried extensive reports on the trials and sentencing of the thirteen defendants, referring to them as a "gang [. . .] accused of conspiracy to overthrow the Government and to make propaganda against the Revolution". The most violent accusations were levelled against Fr Le Thanh Que SJ and Mr Nguyen Van Hien. Hien was described as "a very dangerous reactionary element" and said to have been "working for many years with the CIA" and to have "initiated the meeting with Le Thanh Que to sound out and unite reactionary elements with the purpose of expanding their activities against the Revolution". Hien was sentenced to life imprisonment, while a sentence of fifteen years was imposed on the fifty-year-old Fr Le Thanh Que. Fr Que is described in Mr Cuong's report as "a most quiet religious man", a description which contrasts sharply with the newspaper's allegations that this "very incisive and drastic reactionary [. . .] has undertaken several activities against the Revolution in various forms". The basis of the accusations made against Fr Que was his work in producing the purely religious

magazine *Dao Nhap The*, devoted to the subject of living faith in the world. At the trial it was alleged that Fr Que and his "accomplices" used "this reactionary magazine [. . .] to make propaganda, to deceive and stimulate Catholics against the Revolutionary Government. In many articles of this magazine they reported the attitudes of Peking Radio and Voice of America [. . .] to distort the policy of our Government, and they have fabricated and distorted the actions of the Revolutionary Government. They also used *Dao Nhap The* magazine to call their accomplices to their meetings."

There were eight such "accomplices" in the production of *Dao Nhap The*. The 46-year-old Professor of Linguistics Peter Pham Hu Lai SJ was accused of using "depraved and reactionary novels which were forbidden by the Revolutionary Government, for discussion in meetings to corrupt youth" and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Mr Hoan Van Khanh, a voluntary assistant to Fr Que, accused at the trial of having "written articles distorting the policy of the Party and of the Government", was also sentenced to four years; Mr Trong Van Tuyen, another voluntary assistant, was sentenced to three years for his work on the magazine and for allegedly having "organised the secret rendezvous for Le Thanh Que and the reactionary element Nguyen Van Hien". Fr Joseph Khuat Duy Lin, 44, a Jesuit superior and full-time parish priest, was given a four-year suspended sentence (but will be under surveillance and on probation for five years) for having "vigorously supported" the magazine. Two lay volunteer assistants, Miss Mai Thi Kim Loan and Mr Vu Duc Hoa, were released with an "admonition"; two priests, Fr Nguyen Van Hoa OP, who had worked with the Jesuits on the translation of religious literature, and Fr Roch Dinh Van Trung SJ, were released with an official warning.

Fr Nguyen Cong Doan SJ was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. His activities as Jesuit Regional Superior had included translation of religious works, the teaching of Holy Scriptures to Seminary students and several convents and parishes, giving retreats, and writing and publishing the *Meditation on the Sunday Word of God* (apparently a leaflet distributed free of charge). The accusations made against him at the trial were that he had "abused his office to allow Le Thanh Que secretly and illegally to publish and circulate the reac-

tionary magazine to propagate distortions of the policy of the government [...] and use Dac Lo as a rendezvous for secret meetings of reactionaries to discuss their reactionary activities"; he had also allegedly "used the trick of getting in touch with escapees to obtain gold" and "raised funds by receiving money from international reactionary organisations overseas". Fr Joseph Hoang Sy Quy SJ, the Regional Economist, was accused of organising these alleged financial dealings, and given a two-year suspended sentence (he is to be under surveillance and on probation for four years). The Regional Superior's Assistant, Fr Do Quang Chinh SJ, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for his involvement in the production of *Dao Nhap The*, including the writing of some articles.

The closure of the Dac Lo Centre and

sentencing of 13 of its staff and associates is clearly an attack levelled specifically against Jesuits, but it is not an isolated case of repression of Catholics in Vietnam. As part of the Government's attempts to control the activities of the Catholic Church in South Vietnam (which according to 1980 figures has about 3 million adherents and over 2,000 priests) several church leaders have been kept under house arrest for some time. The 62-year-old Archbishop of Hanoi, Joseph-Maria Trinh Van Can, and the Archbishop of Hue, Philippe Nguyen Kim Dien, also 62, are both under house arrest, and for some time there has been no news of the Archbishop-Coadjutor of Ho Chi Minh City, 55-year-old Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, who was arrested and assigned to a compulsory place of residence.

CAROLYN BURCH

Recent Events in Poland

At the beginning of May pro-Solidarity demonstrations were organised in many Polish towns. They were dispersed by the police and hundreds of people were arrested.

On 14 May 1984 the Secretariat of the Polish Primate sent a letter to the official press agency PAP protesting against the "simplifying and misinterpreting" by the Polish mass media of the sermon which Cardinal Glemp had delivered the previous day in Kraków. The section which was said to have been misinterpreted concerned relations between the Church and the State. The original text read: "cooperation between the State and the Church will be possible when an atmosphere of national unity has been achieved", while the PAP report implied that such a state of affairs already exists and that there are no barriers to an immediate understanding between the Church and the authorities in Poland.

On 17 June, elections to Poland's Municipal Councils took place. For several months prior to the elections, controversy had made it likely that they would prove to be the occasion for a major showdown between the government and Solidarity. The government tried to prove that normalisation and stabilisation had been achieved, with the return of democratic procedures and public participation in political life. Solidarity called for a boycott

of the election as a symbolic reaffirmation of public support for the ideals of the banned union and opposition to the regime. According to government figures announced on 19 June, 74.95% of Poland's 25,900,000 electorate had voted. These figures were challenged the next day by the Solidarity underground leadership. According to Solidarity calculations, just under 60% of the electorate went to the polls — the total of 10,500,000 voters who were said to have boycotted the elections equals the former membership of the Solidarity Free Trade Union.

The Roman Catholic Church remained outwardly uninvolved in the issue of the elections. Unofficially, some local clergy did occasionally voice their unfavourable view of the elections and indirectly discourage their congregations from going to the polls. The only official statement of the Church's stance on the issue came in the communiqué of the joint church-government Commission which met on 4 June. The communiqué, which briefly noted that "special attention had been paid to the need for, and the actual possibility of . . . active participation by society in public affairs for the good of the nation", was conveniently open-ended, hinting at possible participation in the elections (the "public affair" in everyone's mind) and at the same time suggesting the unlikelihood of such partici-

pation. It was left to the conscience of each individual to decide for himself.

Five of the 81 bishops resident in Poland voted in the elections. Other members of the hierarchy, including Cardinal Glemp, were "unavailable" to vote in their respective constituencies as they were meeting in Radom for the 201st Plenary Conference and for the main celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the death of St Casimir. Just how badly the authorities wanted the Church's overt support for the elections was illustrated by the incident involving Bishop Majewski. A few days before the elections Bishop Tadeusz Majewski, dressed in his episcopal robes, appeared on Polish television and stated that electoral participation was "the duty of the Christian conscience". This caused widespread consternation among the people, since only those who knew the names of all the 89 Roman Catholic bishops would have realised that Majewski is not one of them; he is in fact the head of the Polish Catholic Church, founded in 1918, which claims a membership of only 34,150 as compared with over 30 million Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic Episcopate immediately protested and demanded a correction which was duly broadcast, although on radio and not on television.

Throughout the spring the Church had been taking part in secret talks, acting as an important mediator between political prisoners and the government. Their hopes for an amnesty *before* the elections were not fulfilled, and on the eve of the election Cardinal Glemp, addressing a congregation of 15,000, condemned the authorities for stepping up political repression and demanded the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience. The issue was taken up even more forcefully in the communiqué summing up the 201st Plenary Conference: noting that during the Conference "various bishops" had expressed their deep concern over the number of arrests made for political reasons, the episcopate stressed that it would not give up its efforts "to bring about a full solution to the problem". As the arrests had given rise to increased tension and had not brought "social peace" any closer, only the release of all prisoners of conscience would, in the bishops' view, remove the tension and help to create "a new political climate" in the country. As if to

emphasise that the episcopate's stance had the approval of the Pope, the communiqué quoted a telegram sent by Pope John Paul II to the Conference in which he referred to St Casimir as a model of the "worthy and responsible ruler" intent on serving the people "in truth, charity and justice". The Pope, in turn, later included some quotations from the bishops' communiqué in his speech to the Polish pilgrims during his weekly audience on 27 June.

In the amnesty commemorating 40 years of Communist rule in Poland 625 political prisoners were released as well as 35,000 allegedly ordinary criminals (at least some of whom were in fact imprisoned for supporting dissidents or trade unionists by some form of public action). The Church welcomed the amnesty but Cardinal Glemp sent a letter to the Polish Parliament "in the name of the entire Polish episcopate" in which, although praising the amnesty, he asked for pluralism in public life and made a plea for the amnesty to be extended to include the reinstatement of some 100,000 Poles who since December 1981 had lost their jobs or their places at school or university for purely political reasons.

Some of the individual priests went even further in their demands. Fr Teofil Bogucki, a parish priest of the St Stanisław Kostka church in Warsaw, and his vicar Fr Jerzy Popiełuszko, speaking at a Mass for the prisoners freed under the amnesty, urged the Polish authorities to follow up the amnesty by restoring Solidarity, permitting freedom of expression, freeing underground Solidarity leader Bogdan Lis who was exempted from the amnesty, and restoring the right to erect crucifixes in school buildings.

During the Corpus Christi procession in Warsaw on 21 June, Cardinal Glemp received a standing ovation from some 50,000 believers after he had denounced state-imposed atheism and reasserted Poland's identity as a Catholic nation. The Cardinal also stressed that the freedom of man was in effect "the freedom to choose his values". Referring to the atheistic outlook in Poland and in "other countries" as a "belief shared only by a minority" of the citizens, he noted that atheism was liable to render people "more docile towards state authorities" and less receptive to true human values.

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