

from the East will call a halt after they have destroyed us? No! [. . .] Bolshevism is getting ready to destroy the civilization, the culture and the Christianity of the world [. . .]

Holy Father! We ask you to proclaim for all believers of the world a Lithuanian Day, as Benedict XV of pious memory did in 1917. Let the world learn of the torments, persecutions and distress of the Lithuanian Catholics, caused by 20th century godlessness.

We ask Your Holiness to direct a word of public comfort and encouragement to the Lithuanian people. Holy Father, speak a word of encouragement, as the first Pope, St. Peter, once did in Rome. What we are suffering for our Mother, the Catholic Church, is just as great.

We ask you to pass our complaints on to the United Nations, so that the rulers of the nations may put an end to our torments.

We ask for more frequent and longer Lithuanian broadcasts. Do we not deserve this on account of the sacrifices we are making for our holy faith? [. . .]

We are dying, but in our death we wish to hear your word of comfort, and

the assurance of the Catholic world that our children will not have to bear the yoke of slavery any more. We are convinced that your mighty word will shake the leaders of the freedom-loving peoples awake.

Holy Father, this letter is not written as we would have wished. We are writing underground, by flickering lamp-light, every moment expecting the arrival of the secret police. We deliberately avoid giving the exact name of this place and our own names, so as not to divulge any information to the secret police.

If this letter reaches Your Holiness, we may no longer be alive. By the time it reaches its goal, some of those who carried it on them will have been felled by the bullets of the secret police.

Holy Father, give us, those who are dying for the freedom of the faith and of our people, your blessing!

Praise be to Jesus Christ, Lord of the living and the dead!

Vilnius, in occupied Lithuania,
20 September 1948.

Roman Catholic Christians
of the Republic of Lithuania.

Slovak Catholics Protest

Catholics in Slovakia have distributed a leaflet protesting at the treatment of believers. Two thousand copies of the leaflet were printed, it was reported. The text appeared in Die Welt, 29 November, 1975. A report also appeared in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 26 September, 1975 (see RCL Vol 4, No. 3, p. 58).

This year our State is rendering account for 30 post-war years. We want to use this occasion to look also at the reverse side of our social reality, not solely at the number of newly erected factories, streets, dams, schools, department stores and apartments, but also at the moral aspect.

The materialist dogma in our country has been elevated to the level of scientific doctrine. We are suspicious when so much science has to be continually cited. The more closely we examine the world order, the clearer it becomes that atheism is unscientific. Atheism came to birth in the middle of the 19th century,

but science has made enormous progress since then. Dialectical materialism claims that only matter exists. According to its theory, only what can be proved experimentally and measured is true. But who has succeeded in measuring eternity and infinity?

Atheism is a negative creed. A grandmother in a small Czechoslovak village simply believes the priest when he says that God exists. In contrast, the atheist believes his propagandist who claims that there is no God behind the world order. But the grandmother at least feels that a force must rule this order. Atheism is not the ideology of the workers but the product of the bourgeois intelligentsia. That is what Lenin wrote in his pamphlet *What is to be done?* Currently we note that the majority of the Nobel prize winners, the geniuses of present day humanity, are convinced believers who are applying their faith in practice.

An ideological weakness of the "scien-

tific" materialistic world view is its incompatibility with all non-Marxist philosophies and religions. It cannot tolerate competition because it would lose out in the struggle. It therefore uses repressive methods like imprisonment and torture. While our politicians speak of persuasion and patience and the recognition of religious faith, we are witnessing daily how believers are being maligned in the press. And woe to the priest who would dare to protest publicly. Do we only owe thanks for the reconstruction of our homeland to atheists, and not to the work of those who constitute the majority of our people, the believers? Do these people deserve nothing but discrimination and abuse?

Religion is called "the opium of the people", but the pubs, where in our country "common sense" and "social feeling" prevail, are not full of believers and the reasoning there does not concern religious dogmas. Everywhere Christian morality is being maligned. But what is being offered in its place? The young who are growing up are indifferent and cynical. But the responsibility for this lies not with religious education in families, but with anti-religious education in schools. The posters proclaim 30 years of freedom. But where there is no spiritual freedom, no freedom of information and of movement, no freedom of the word and of conviction there is no freedom for man. What we are witnessing is a regression, a return to 19th century servitude when the credo of the masters was: "He who holds the power determines the religion." At that time, subjects were not permitted to leave their gracious master's domain without permission. Are we aware of this?

We have been promised that the repression of the 50s would not recur. But a much more subtle kind of liquidation of our Church is now taking place compared to those dark days. Why dirty one's hands and make martyrs out of imprisoned priests and believers? The bishops and priests themselves liquidate the Church. Compromised personalities and weak characters from the ranks of priests want to buy a good life for a Judas' coin. They crave titles and baroque costumes. They represent a kind of feudal Church serving

every regime. They are ingratiating themselves with their bread givers and attack the Church and the faith.

When, for example, have our new bishops ever publicly stood up for the faith and the faithful? At the meeting of the Catholic clergy in Prague on 14 January 1976 a minister of the CSSR declared: "As hitherto, we will continue to negotiate with the Vatican on the basis of the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak State and we will not negotiate about our internal affairs. We have our own religious-political principles and we will continue to build on them." In other words: discrimination against believers and persecution is the CSSR's internal affair. This is also the principle adopted by the military junta in Chile.

Let us look at the schools of this country. The school councils, principals and teachers punish those pupils whose parents send them to religious instruction or who pray with them. Parents who enroll their children in religious instruction classes are warned that children committed to religion will not be accepted into secondary schools but will have to become manual labourers. According to the instructions of the Ministry of Culture and Education, admission to secondary schools depends less on knowledge than on whether the child attended religious instruction or not. Thus gifted children are debarred from higher education. This conflicts with Art. 24 of the Constitution: "All citizens enjoy an equal right to education." Thus the State wastes thousands of talents, by illegal means and this, we assume, will have catastrophic results for our country's cultural and economic life. Draw the attention of school principals and teachers to their unlawful and criminal activity!

But let us wait. In the end we will end up with a Christian working class, and it will be the most progressive element in our society.

All these actions by the Ministry of Culture contradict the Czechoslovak law: "Those who have not reached the age of 15 are not punishable by law." Who finally has a right to the child? The school council perhaps, the principal, or an official perhaps? Art. 32 of the family law states: "All

power in Czechoslovakia belongs to the working class." Who has given the comrades the right to ignore these legal precepts? Who pays for the schools? Whose work supports these teachers and officials?

According to statistics 14.1% are atheists, 70.7% are believers, and 15.2% are undecided in Slovakia. What gives the minority of atheists the right to flout the rights of the believers? By what right do they force their views on the believers? Who gave the order to ignore the rights of citizens and subject believers to discrimination? Why is the public prosecutor's office, which is supposed to watch over our socialist legislation, silent? Why is the Communist Party which claims the leading role in our society, silent? Who has chosen the officials? How much screening is there of citizens, how many political reports are kept about every citizen? It seems that many officials confuse socialism with anarchism and aim at creating a legal jungle in our country.

Even before the First World War, Lenin wrote: "Social democrats demand that everybody be given the right to freedom of belief. Only in Russia and Turkey were shameful laws passed against people who adopted a faith other than the Greek Orthodox. These laws have either explicitly banned a certain religion or banned its propagation or have deprived people belonging to a certain religion of their rights. All such laws are the most unjust, violent, and shameful which exist. Everybody therefore must be permitted not only to em-

brace any faith quite freely but also to propagate it and to change it. No official can have the right to ask someone about his religion. This is a matter of conscience and no one is allowed to interfere. Similarly Karl Marx teaches: "The right to believe whatever one wishes, the right to exercise the cult of one's own religion is the express right of man. Freedom of Religion is a universal human right." Even the Central Committee declared on various occasions that religious persecution today is not only unlawful and anti-Marxist but even "shameful".

Friends, get to know the laws of the CSSR and stand up for their implementation with all your might. Do not remain silent, defend yourselves. Do not tolerate any injustice. Whoever tolerates injustice is guilty of the worst moral corruption. Do not close your eyes, do not pretend to be deaf, do something. Do not be satisfied with "published" information. Nothing will improve by itself. And you will only have those rights which you yourselves are able to enforce. Do not rely on the West nor on the compromised priests. Look for sincere clergymen and able laymen. If you have no priests of your own, organize meetings yourselves. Procure literature, study your religion, because only by real study will you discover the true face of God, of the Church and of the world. Bring up your children in a religious spirit. Lead a Christian life and teach your children selflessness. Catholics, Protestants and all Christians unite!