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Contributions to Freedom of Religion and Belief 2

The Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union

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Foreword

In 1988, the millennium of the Christianization of Kievan Rus' was celebrated in Moscow with great festivities as the baptism of Russia, with numerous visitors from abroad and in the presence of church dignitaries of various denominations from all over the world.

It was quite different in 1986, when Latvians and Estonians celebrated the 800th anniversary of Christianity in Livonia, and in 1987, when Lithuanians celebrated the 600th anniversary of their baptism. At that time, no ecclesiastical visitors from abroad were allowed to attend, and there was still a great deal of harassment and discrimination for Catholics, even though the Roman Catholic Church has long been the second largest church in the Soviet Union.

In the context of the Millennium of Kievan Rus', it has been pointed out that Christianity had gained a foothold among the Eastern Slavs long before the year 988, especially from Bulgaria. The Nestor Chronicle has the Apostle Andrew traveling upriver from Sinope across the mouth of the Dnieper River and erecting a cross on the site of what would later become Kiev. According to Roman tradition, St. Clement, the third successor of St. Peter, was exiled to the Crimea and suffered martyrdom there. The Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius later brought his bones to Rome, where they are still venerated in the Basilica of St. Clement. Thus, Latin Christianity has also been connected with the territories of later Russia since the earliest times.

Today there are several million Roman Catholics in the Soviet Union. In eleven of the 15 Soviet Union republics, the Catholic Church is represented by registered parishes. But even where there are no official parishes (in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), there are numerous Catholics. Their history and suffering will be presented in the following pages, as well as the relief that has come in recent years thanks to glasnost and perestroika.

Emphasis will be placed on the Catholic Russian Germans, tens of thousands of whom have already emigrated to us. With this publication, as with our other publications, we want to awaken solidarity with fellow believers for whom the interest of the world public is not too great, but who need our prayers and help.

After the situation of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine was described in issue 1 of „Contributions to Freedom of Religion and Belief“, this will now also be done for the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite. It has been a church of non-Russians, which grew enormously since the partitions of Poland and through the settlement of colonists already in the Russian Tsarist Empire. In Russia before the October Revolution there were flourishing dioceses, seminaries and church schools. In the Baltic states, which became independent in 1918, the Catholic Church was able to expand its hierarchy and found new dioceses until these fell back under the rule of Moscow in 1940.
In the following, the situation before 1917 will be presented in a historical survey and the destruction of the church in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution will be described. Then the situation in individual regions or republics of the Soviet Union will be discussed. The Catholic Church of the Soviet Union is unfortunately too little known in the West. Above all, its unwavering advocacy of religious freedom and human rights has elevated its reputation. It has never been so unhappily aligned with the state as the Russian Orthodox Church, which has allowed itself to be abused by Moscow time and again and to this day does not grant the Uniate any right to life.

Of course, what Adam Olearius wrote is long past: „The hatred of the Russians against the Latin Church is original and somehow native; their ancestors took it from the Greeks and passed it on as an inheritance to their descendants.“ Or when the Jesuit Antonio Possevino notes of Ivan the Terrible's time, „The Muscovites hate the Latins so much that they say to someone they wish ill: let them make a Latin out of you!“

For decades the Vatican has been slandered as „the main base of reaction in the world,“ the Pope as „the eternal enemy of the Russian people.“ Today, many Soviet citizens look to the Roman Catholic Church with hope.

If Booklet 2 of „Contributions to Freedom of Religion and Belief“ can help to acquaint those interested with the fate of our Catholic brothers and sisters in the USSR and help visitors and tourists to find Catholic parishes in the Soviet Union more easily during visits and to get to know them, - then it would have achieved its purpose.

The German-speaking secretariats of Aid to the Church in Need/Eastern Priests Munich, Lucerne, Vienna, on the Feast of the Slavic Apostles Cyril and Methodius, February 14, 1989.

Note on the spelling of names

In spelling the geographical names in the Soviet Union, I have tried to retain old common German names. Just as Cape Town, Rome, Athens, Naples, Prague, Warsaw, and Moscow have remained firmly in the vernacular, so should names such as Lviv, Vilna, Memel, Reval, Dorpat, or Tbilisi.

No one resents an Italian or a Frenchman naming Munich as Monaco and Cologne as Cologne. Nor should we be prevented from using the old names in the East, especially since some place names have become part of history and literature. I mention only the convention of Tauroggen or Werner Bergengruen's „Death of Reval“. If, for example, we renounce the German name Lemberg, the Russian Lvov, the Ukrainian Lwiw or the Polish Lwów should be used. Italians unconcernedly spoke of Leopoli, the Swedes of Levensberg - and mean Lemberg.

However, many names for medium-sized and large cities in the East have also disappeared from our linguistic consciousness. That Kaunas is called Kowno in Polish and Russian is even better known than the German name Kauen; also the German names Ponewesch, Telschen or Wilkowischken for the Lithuanian bishoprics Panevežys, Telšiai and Vilkaviškis have long been forgotten.

Of course, the official name of the respective republic is used when giving addresses. Rudolf Grulich
Introduction

Although there is much talk of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union today, the practice of religious freedom for the Catholic Church still looks modest. As late as September 1988, I received in Moscow a brochure „Catholic Church in the USSR“ published by APN in 1984, in which Igor Trojanovski describes in euphemistic terms on 64 pages the happy situation of the Catholics. There, Stalin's government decree „On Religious Associations“ of April 8, 1929 is praised and it is claimed that in the Soviet Union „the members of all confessions as well as the atheists enjoy the same rights and duties and live together as a friendly family."

The same Troyanovski, who since 1987 in „Moscow News“ and other journals sees himself as an author of perestroika and propagates glasnost, in 1984 still glorifies every wrong of Moscow and presents the actually non-existent freedom of conscience as an indispensable right of every Soviet citizen. Yes, this freedom of conscience has not only always been maintained, but further developed and deepened!

There is talk of „perfectly normal relations“ between the Roman Catholic Church and the Soviet Union, of the reliable guarantee of the rights of Catholics, who enjoy full freedom of conscience and confession. At that time, however, priests such as Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevicius were in prison, and numerous laymen were in camps and exile for demanding religious freedom.

Trojanovski wrote about the successful teaching at the Catholic seminaries in Riga and Kaunas, although he must have known that the KGB decided who was admitted to study at the seminaries. But the author did not stop at whitewashing, he also slandered: he lets Catholic clergy collaborate with Hitler's fascists and claims that Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius supported fascist paratroopers in the last months of the war and later armed bands of bourgeois nationalists. What is not mentioned, however, is that the bishop was arrested in 1946 and shot after cruel torture in early November 1946. Trojanovski makes Potemkin villages to the reader when he writes about the printing of religious books. For the alleged positive situation of the Catholics, Trojanovski also quotes foreign visitors: members of the (East) Berlin Catholic Conference or representatives of the East Berlin CDU.

Trojanovski's brochure has been distributed in various languages around the world. Similar brochures are also available for other churches and are still being distributed. Under the title „My Faith is Free,“ even church leaders of different creeds had to sing their praises of „religious freedom“ in the USSR.

And yet - the glasnost era under Gorbachev has since 1987 also allowed other voices to resound. Trojanovski himself called the taking away of the church „Mary - Queen of Peace“ in Memel by the Soviet authorities an injustice in an article published by „Moscow News“. He quoted the secretary of the Central Committee, Longinas Sepetis, according to which „the state printing houses realize orders for printing religious literature only with delay. The Catholic calendar is not published on time. In schools, some teachers carry out atheist propaganda in an inadmissible manner, allowing rudeness and insulting religious feelings of believers“.

The extent to which truth was distorted before Gorbachev's „glasnost“ has been openly expressed time and again, especially in the Baltic States. On August 23, 1988, on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the historian Lindas Truska spoke openly of the fact that
the policy of Stalinism with regard to small peoples was similar to that of fascism: „The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its immediate consequence - the liquidation of the sovereign Lithuanian state - brought severe misfortune to the Lithuanian people: violence and torture, mass deportations and murders, destruction of the economy and culture.

We must be aware that all inhabitants of Lithuania, whether Lithuanians or Jews, Poles or Russians, who were deported or tortured in prisons or died in the postwar years, are victims of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.” And Truska continued, „The time of repentance has come, which purifies people, society and the nation. The historians have the most to atone for. I, as a historian, am ashamed that for years we did not tell the whole truth, half the truth, or even less than half the truth - and that is the purest lie.

Society, for its part, must put pressure on historians to demand that they write the whole truth and only the truth on all issues. “ These were words for which, in 1983, men like Alfonas Svarinskas or Sigitas Tamkevicius were still sentenced to long prison terms. Antanas Terleckas, as a long-time prisoner, was able to declare to applause at the founding meeting of the Lithuanian Transformation Movement „Sajudis“ in October 1988: „It is a joy to see your people liberate themselves. Just like the Crusaders subjugated the Old Prussians, our eastern neighbor subjugated the Lithuanian people in 1939 or even earlier and raised their children to be gravediggers of their people. That I can speak from this tribune today, I thank Mother Lithuania, who raised the freedom-loving children. How much our freedom was hated!

In order for us to forget this word, it was first necessary to destroy the intelligentsia and the clergy. Today we are deeply pained by the spiritual decay of the nation. How many clever teachers and worthy clergymen would have become from high school students who were martyred to death in the Rainiai grove! In spite of the executioners, the nation remained alive. How many eyes shining with joy I see in this hall.”

Perhaps Danute Subac spoke most clearly at the founding meeting of „Saju-dis“ as a representative of the support group for cše Lithuanian Transformation Movement (LUB) from Workuta, where more than 6,000 Lithuanians live today: „It probably sounds a bit strange: „The LUB support group from Workuta. After all, there are thousands of kilometers between our group and Lithuania. But the fact remains: a group of Lithuanian enthusiasts was formed, who are not indifferent to the fate of Lithuania and Lithuanians living in Siberia. The tragic fate of each deportee is a heroic deed, which has not been recognized nowadays. They do not want medals or decorations.

They need their warmth of heart and Lithuania. Grant them shelter, enable them to spend the evening of their lives in the homeland that remained alive in their hopes and dreams for many years. Relentlessly, Mrs. Subac called the reality by its name: >The Stalinist executioners have been living in Lithuania until now, enjoying privileges, and only now the issue of the return of their victims to the homeland is being addressed.

If today we raise the question of citizenship of Lithuania, we must achieve that all Lithuanians, regardless of where they live - in America, Australia, Kaliningrad or Siberia - receive this citizenship. They should also have all the constitutional rights of citizens of Lithuania. We must prevent another generation of Lithuanians from living in Siberia because of misdeeds of their parents and relatives. “

She then made two demands:

„1. to establish at the Council of the Seimas (the Lithuanian Parliament!) a commission for maintaining relations with Lithuanians in the RSFSR. Its main function would be to enable our compatriots to return. 2. to support the Sajudis group of Workuta and to inform them about
everything. Our tasks, works and duties are: to help and comfort the unfortunate, to support them in
their hope, to take care of their graves, to expose the atrocities of Stalinism, to visit their relatives, to
enable Russianized Lithuanians to learn their native language and to educate them about Lithuanian
culture.” If we look at the documentation of the founding meeting of „Sajudis”, which was also printed
in German in Vilnius, we are amazed by the openness, but also the realism and understanding for
other nations and the national minorities in Lithuania. This is also expressed in a „Declaration of Good
Will”, which states:

„We, participants of the Lithuanian Transformation Movement, in conscious responsibility, before
which the socio-political renewal, the national and ethical rebirth of society confronts us, stand:

for unity, against division for confidence, against distrust for construction, against destruction for
promotion, against oppression in all spheres of life. We are determined: to oppose peace to discord,
to fight falsehood with truth.”

The following pages are intended to serve this truth.

Koenigstein, on the 150th anniversary of the ill-fated Synod of Polotzk,

February 12, 1989

Rudolf Grulich

The Historical Development

The Latin Church in Russia until the October Revolution

If we disregard the legend that the Apostle Andrew had already erected the first cross on the site of
what later became Kiev, it is Pope Clement I, the third successor of St. Peter, who, by his exile to what
is now the Crimea, gives an early Roman testimony in the territories of what later became Russia.
From him also comes the so-called Letter of Clement, one of the oldest Christian writings outside the
New Testament. Clement worked as a deportee in the quarries of Chersones and was sunk into the
Black Sea with an anchor around his neck. Therefore, he is considered the patron saint of
stonemasons and is depicted as the pope with the anchor. Excavations in the Taurian Chersones,
inscriptions and ruins testify to Christian life and episcopal sees of the first post-Christian centuries on
the northern shore of the Black Sea. Later, after the turn of the millennium, we find there also Latin
bishoprics and monasteries of the Franciscans and Dominicans, and under the Golden Horde chanate,
also branches of the Jesuits.

In Kiev, St. Olga asked Emperor Otto I for a Latin archbishop, Adalbert of Trier, but he could not stay
in Kiev. In Novgorod the German merchants had churches in Goths’ Court and in Peter’s Court, which
Ivan the Terrible had closed after the conquest of Novgorod. The expansion of the Grand Duchy of
Lithuania, united with the Kingdom of Poland under one ruler, brings large parts of the Empire of
Kievan Rus’ under Polish-Lithuanian rule, where the Latin Church spreads also in the East.

In Russia proper, Protestant churches had existed in Moscow since the 16th century, but it was only
under Peter the Great that Catholics were allowed to build churches in 1705. However, the first Catholic church in Moscow had already been built before that. At that time Jesuits of the Bohemian Province of the Order were working in Russia, and the first Christmas crib in Moscow can be traced back to them. The first Catholic stone church in Moscow was built on the model of the Prague Church of the Holy Cross. But already under Ivan the Terrible, the Jesuit Antonio Possevino had been commissioned by Gregory XIII to try to win the tsar and his country over to the Catholic Church. But it was not until the first partition of Poland in 1772, when Latgalia and Belarus became part of Russia, that the number of Catholics grew from about 10,000 to several hundred thousand, and increased still further with the settlement of colonists on the Volga. Franciscans and Capuchins in the 18th century had branches in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Astrakhan, Riga and Yamburg, which were under the control of the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and the Nuncio in Warsaw, respectively.

After the first partition of Poland, Tsarina Catherine the Great appointed a bishop for Belarus, whom she made Archbishop of Mohilev in 1782. After the second and third partition of Poland, six Latin dioceses came to Russia: Livonia, Samogitia, Vilnius, Lutzk and Kamenets. At that time the empress redefined the boundaries of the diocese of Livonia and abolished the other dioceses without the pope's consent. Instead, she founded two new dioceses. However, her son and successor Paul I reversed this decision and authorized six Latin dioceses in the Russian Empire: The Archbishopric of Mohilev and the dioceses of Vilnius, Samogitia, Minsk, Lutzk and Kamenets. Mohilev was thus the largest diocese in the world, as it extended to Alaska.

Under the Tsar, the Jesuit Order, abolished by the Pope since 1773, could continue to exist in Russia, which Pope Pius VII, also approved in 1801, before allowing the Order to exist again for the whole Church in 1815. For the Catholics of the Kingdom of Poland there was a separate ecclesiastical province of Warsaw after the Congress of Vienna. From the beginning of his reign, Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) not only took irreconcilable action against the Uniates, but also closed numerous Catholic churches beginning in 1832. In 1839 he incorporated the Uniate Church on Russian soil entirely into the Orthodox Church and "legalized" this by a synod in Polotzk.

Nevertheless, the tsar came to Rome in December 1845 and visited the pope twice. After his death in 1846, there were further negotiations under Pius IX, and a concordat was concluded on August 3, 1847. In this concordat the tsar assured the retention of the ecclesiastical province of Mohilev with the bishoprics of Vilnius, Samogitia, Minsk, Lutzk and Kamenets, as well as the reestablishment of a bishopric of Kherson or Tiraspol. A special agreement was reached for the pastoral care of the Catholic Armenians, and the continued existence of the ecclesiastical province of Warsaw with its eight dioceses was also guaranteed.

Nevertheless, there were further anti-Catholic measures on the part of the tsar, especially in Lithuania and Poland. After the Polish uprising of 1863, there was even a break in relations between St. Petersburg and Rome. In 1882 a new concordat was agreed upon, but it was not until after the 1905 revolution that the situation eased.

A statistic of the ecclesiastical province of Mohilev according to the „Klemens“, the German church newspaper of Tiraspol, from 1902 gives the following picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>parish churches</th>
<th>branch churches</th>
<th>chapels</th>
<th>priests</th>
<th>souls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohilev</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>930 519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilnius</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1 356 910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samogitia</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>1 254 884</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an example, broken down by individual deaneries from pp. 134-138.

If retired clergy were deducted, in old Russia there were 2820 souls for one priest in the diocese of Mohilev, 3944 in Vilnius, 1973 in Samogitia, 2515 in Lutsk-Shitomir, 2400 in Tiraspol. In the diocese of Tiraspol there were also 46 Armenian Catholic parishes with 39 churches. 38 priests and 30 871 souls. In addition, there was one parish with Chaldean Catholics of 319 souls. This parish was Zyagut, in the governorate of Yerevan.

The seat of the Archbishopric of Mohilev was the imperial capital of St. Petersburg, which also housed an Imperial Roman Catholic Spiritual Academy and the seminary. There was another seminary in Saratov on the Volga River for the Russian Germans of the Tiraspol Diocese.

On the eve of the First World War, 68 students from twelve dioceses were studying at the Spiritual Academy, and the seminary, including the preparatory course, had 160 students. In addition, the Catholic Church in the capital had two high schools and a district school.

At the seminary, in addition to the ancient languages, Russian, German, French and Latgali were taught.

Already in 1850 the number of Catholics in St. Petersburg was 28 000, among them mostly Poles and Germans. There were 13 Catholic churches and chapels throughout the city.

The cathedral church was St. Catherine's Church on Nevsky Prospekt. Outside the capital there were Catholic churches in Kronstadt, Yamburg, Tsarskoe Selo and Oranienbaum. The number of German Catholics in St. Petersburg in 1914 was over 5000, the number of German Protestants almost 50000.

The Archdiocese of Mohilev counted a total of 23 deaneries in 1914. Some examples about the population:

Mohilev Deanery:
5 parishes, 5 churches and chapels. 11620 faithful.

Rogačevo-Bychov deanery:
3 parishes with parish churches and 7 chapels.

Gomel Deanery:
4 parishes and 1 branch, 24 villages with chapels. Lepel Deanery:
7 parishes with parish churches and 25 chapels. 20 000 faithful.

1 deanery Dünaburg:
12 parishes and 2 branches, 10 villages with chapels. 94 000 faithful. 2nd deanery Dünaburg:
8 parishes with 10 chapels and branches. 48 000 faithful. Riga Deanery:

3 parishes in the city of Riga, others in Reval, Dorpat, Walk, etc. 41600 faithful.

Moscow Deanery:

2 parishes in the city and 1 branch, plus outside Moscow the parishes of Nizhniy Novgorod (now Gorky, Ryazan and Tuer. 33 000 believers,

27 700 of them in Moscow.

Deanery seats were also Irkutsk, Tomsk and Omsk. In addition, there were urban communities in Arkhangelsk, Vladimir, Kazan, Kaluga, Tula, Ufa, Kharkov and other places, in the Asian part of Russia behind the Urals in Nikolajevsk on the Amur, Charbin, Tashkent and Harbin.

It was possible to rebuild numerous churches until the First World War e.g. in Lepel in 1857, Minsk (Assumption) in 1861, Omsk in 1867, Irkutsk in 1884, Rositten in 1893, Riga St. Albert in 1903, Tobolsk in 1907, Minsk St. Helena in 1910. In many places there were still baroque churches of the 17th and 18th centuries, which originated from Polish times.

The attempted destruction of the church after the October Revolution

In the struggle against the Catholic Church in Russia, which, according to Lenin's will, transformed itself into the Soviet Union on December 30, 1922, we can distinguish three stages. In the first, the old dioceses were liquidated and the bishops expelled; in the second, Stalin succeeded in smashing the hierarchy secretly consecrated by Bishop Michel d'Herbigny. The third stage began in 1939 and 1940, respectively, when entire Catholic territories and dioceses came under Soviet rule for the first time with eastern Poland and the Baltic States, and this occurred a second time in 1944/45. The first Catholic bishop to be arrested was the Archbishop of Mohilev, Eduard von Ropp, as early as 1919, who was expelled after several months in prison. His successor Johann Cieplak was arrested in 1922 and sentenced to death in March 1923. He was charged with attempting to form „a counterrevolutionary organization with the aim of revolting against the laws and decrees of the Soviet government.” The only „offenses“ were that he and those charged with him had given religious instruction, which was forbidden to persons under 18 years of age under a decree of January 21, 1921, and that they had refused to turn in church valuables (chalices, etc.). Cieplak was later exchanged for a Polish communist and expelled to Poland, but his vicar general Konstantin Budkiewicz was executed on Good Friday of 1923. The day after the execution, on March 31, 1923, Pravda wrote: „Why don't you open a trial against the Pope of Rome? The Cieplak trial proved that the more responsible person in the resistance organized by counter-revolutionary priests against the confiscation of church property is the Pope of Rome. He should be tried by a revolutionary court. The trial and the recently pronounced verdict.... have proved...that the Catholic clergy is an irrepressible enemy of the poor and of the government of the peasants and workers."

In order to provide pastoral care under the changed conditions of the new regime, Rome divided the Soviet Union into nine ecclesiastical sees. for which the following numbers can be given.

1. archdiocese of Mohilev

with 74 priests, 115 churches, 250 000 believers
2. diocese of Kamenets

with 48 priests, 100 churches, 300,000 believers

3rd Diocese of Minsk

with 14 priests, 46 churches, 150,000 believers

4. diocese Shitomir

with 66 priests, 107 churches, 350,000 believers

5th Diocese of Tiraspol

with 100 priests, 90 churches, 300,000 believers

6. diocese Vladivostok (from February 2, 1923) with 6 priests, 6 churches, 20,000 believers

7. apostol. Vicariate of Caucasus-Crimea

with 30 priests, 30 churches, 70,000 believers

8. apostolic. Vicariate of Siberia (December 1, 1921) with 12 priests, 35 churches, 75,000 faithful.


In addition, there were about ten priests (Ukrainians and Russians) of the Slavonic-Byzantine rite for a few thousand faithful of this rite, headed since 1921 by Exarch Feodorov.

By 1925, however, all the bishops had been expelled or expelled. Monsignor Slivovski of Vladivostok fled to China. Therefore, in 1926, the Vatican, through the president of the papal commission for Russia, the Jesuit Michel d'Herbigny, attempted a reorganization of the ecclesiastical administration. Instead of the old dioceses of Mohilev and Tiraspol, nine new districts were to be created: Moscow, Leningrad, Mohilev-Minsk, Kharkov, Kazan-Sama-ra-Simbirsk, Odessa, Saratov, the Caucasus region, and Georgia. Four of the designated administrators received episcopal ordination in secret through d'Herbigny, who had received episcopal ordination from the nuncio in Berlin, Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, and had been to the Soviet Union three times. Alexander Neveu, consecrated for Moscow, was a Frenchman who had served as a chaplain to the Don Cossacks for decades; Bishop Boleslas Sloskans for Mohilev-Minsk was Latvian but spoke Belarusian well. Bishop Anton Malecki (for Leningrad) was Polish, and Alexander Frison of Odessa came from a Russian-German family.

Soviet authorities, however, soon arrested three of these bishops, of whom Malecki and Sloskans were exchanged for communist spies imprisoned in Poland and Latvia after flour years in their home countries. Bishop Neveu lived in Moscow until 1936, when he went to France due to illness, from where he was barred from returning to Moscow. Bishop Frison was executed in 1937 after a long imprisonment. Since then, the Catholic Church of Russia has been without a hierarchy and began the struggle of the Soviet authorities against the pastors in the parishes. Until the beginning of the Second World War there were many trials of priests „as spies and secret agents of foreign powers”.

It was the time of the underground diaspora, especially in the forced labor camps, of which Walter...
Kolarz states:

“In Siberia and the European Arctic, especially in the Workutage area, captive priests improvised church services, heard confessions, even baptized a number of people, and received non-Catholic Christians into the Church of Rome. The sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated in the most impossible places, in mine tunnels, in the corner of a prisoner's barracks, and even in offices occupied by prisoners. Those who could not attend the services themselves received Holy Communion from fellow prisoners. Chalices and altar cloths were extremely primitive, communion wine was made from dried grapes when it could not be smuggled into the camp, and hosts were baked from wheat flour. The amnesties after Stalin's death, which brought freedom to most imprisoned Catholics, ended this heroic chapter in the history of the Catholic Church.”

**The Leningrad Example**

As an example of how much the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union was outwardly ruined, we mention Leningrad.

In old St. Petersburg, renamed Leningrad after Lenin's death, there had been an Archbishop, a Cathedral Chapter, a Spiritual Academy, a Seminary and 13 Catholic churches. Apart from the archbishop, cathedral chapter, academy and seminary, the Church of St. Casimir and the Church of St. Boniface have completely disappeared. The Church of St. Catherine on Nevsky Prospect, consecrated in 1783, has been closed since 1922. Inside there is now a bicycle warehouse. The liturgical equipment and the mass vestments were received by the Leningrad Drama House.

The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Krasnoarmeyskaya Street) is now a dormitory, and in the former seminary there is an institute of metalworkers. St. Stanislaus Church (22 Pečatnikov Street) serves as a fur warehouse. Of St. Mary's Church at Arsenal'naja No. 8, only an overgrown wilderness can be seen today, as the church burned out in 1925 and the rectory and cemetery were used as a quarry. The Church of the Sacred Heart (Batjuškina No. 1) is now a residential building.

Only the so-called „French“ church Notre Dame de France (Kovenskij Pereulok 7) remained, where Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and others are served by parish priest Josef Povilonis since 1965. The church dates back to 1880. In addition to the 13 churches (eight of which were parish churches), there were nine other Catholic chapels and two Catholic schools until 1917, which were also nationalized.

**Today's situation**

The wider public looks with much favor on the General Secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev. He promises democratization, invokes „glasnost,“ i.e., more transparency and publicity in the internal political life of the Soviet Union, and wants „perestroika,“ the restructuring of society. But what about the Catholic Church? Like all denominations, it is still subject to the religious laws of Stalin's time, which Gorbachev has not yet changed:

Article 124 of the Constitution of the USSR states, „For the purpose of ensuring freedom of conscience for citizens, in the USSR the church is separated from the state and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda are granted to all citizens.”
Here is already one-sidedness and discrimination: Restriction to cult acts for believers, but possibility of propaganda for atheists. The first Soviet Constitution of 1918 had still granted the possibility of „religious propaganda“ even to believers. But the Decree on Religious Associations of April 8, 1929, restricted the activity of churches and placed them totally under the control of the state. The Statute of the Soviet for Religious Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the USSR does even more so. The Plenipotentiary of the Soviet for Religious Affairs to the Council of Ministers of the USSR has the right:

“(a) to supervise the activities of local religious organizations ... To control,
(b) to submit to the local Soviet offices ... to receive documents concerning religion
(c) to provide the republican and local Soviet official bodies ... to give explanations on the application of the legislation on worship,
(d) to raise before the competent republican and local official bodies the question concerning the opening of proceedings of a disciplinary, administrative and criminal nature against persons who have violated the legislation on culture."

According to an instruction on the application of the cult legislation, believers as a religious association may only:

“(a) perform religious rites, hold prayer meetings and other gatherings, connected with the performance of cult; b) employ or elect cult servants or other persons who provide for cult needs;
(c) use a prayer building or other cult property;
(d) collect voluntary offerings from the faithful in the prayer rooms for purposes related to the maintenance of cult servants, the cult building or other cult property, and the executive bodies of religious associations."

Religious education for youth under 18 years of age is prohibited. However, in the practice of „perestroika,“ the situation has improved noticeably in some republics, especially Lithuania and Latvia, since 1988. It is to be hoped that more positive things will happen when religious legislation is given to the competence of the Union republics.

Stocktaking of the Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union

The Catholic Hierarchy of the Soviet Union according to the Pontifical Yearbook

While the Vatican settled the question of dioceses in the German eastern territories as early as 1972 (without waiting for a peace treaty), this did not happen in the case of the former Polish eastern territories - although there is a peace treaty between the Soviet Union and Poland. The Pontifical
Yearbook (Annuario Pontificio) lists the following dioceses for the territory of the Soviet Union:

Under Europe, the section on the geographical distribution of jurisdictions states: Russia; Metropolitan See: Mohilev; Suffragan Bishoprics: Kamienetz, Minsk, Tiraspol, Shitomir.

For Mohilev, in the enumeration of all archdioceses and dioceses, the Belorussian name Mahilau is also given, and without further details, separate apostolic administrators are named for Kohilev, Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov and Kazan-Samara-Simbirsk. For Tiraspol it is written in the part: archdioceses and dioceses:

Apostol. Administrator of Odessa for the southern part of the diocese.... Apostol. Administrator of the Volga region... Apostol. Administrator of the Caucasus... Apostolic. Administrator of Tbilisi and Georgia...

Apostol. Administrator for the Catholic Armenians of all Russia....

Under Asia, Siberia (!) is noted as a country unit with an unoccupied diocese of Vladivostok and an Apostolic Vicariate of Siberia.

All territories that became Soviet only after World War II are still listed under the original countries:

Estonia: Apostol. Administration Estonia Latvia. Metropolitan see Riga

Suffragan Bishopric of Libau Lithuania: Metropolitan See of Kaunas

Suffragan bishoprics of Kaišiadorys, Panevezys, Telšiai, Vilkaviškis, prelature of Memel.

For Vilnius, reference is made to Vilnius in the part „Archdioceses and dioceses“, where two apostolic administrators in Poland and Lithuania are mentioned, but no information about the existence of the archdiocese. Under „Poland“, however, the ecclesiastical province of Vilnius with the suffragan bishopric of Pinsk, located in the present-day USSR, is still noted, as well as Lviv (with Lutzk) as a Latin, Ukrainian and Armenian archbishopric. The „Soviet Union“ appears as a state only once under „Europe“, but only for the area „Ucraina Carpatica“ (Carpathian Ukraine) with the diocese Munkatsch (Byzantine rite).

In the list of bishops' conferences the Latvian and Lithuanian Bishops' Conferences are mentioned, which are members of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences C.C.E.E. (Concilium Conferentiarum Episcopalis Euro-pae).

**Overview of Roman Catholic Parishes**

According to the Riga Archdiocese Ordinariate, at the end of 1987 there were 909 Catholic priests of the Latin rite serving 1066 Roman Catholic parishes on the territory of the USSR. Among them are some Greek Catholic (mostly Ukrainian) priests celebrating in the Latin rite outside Ukraine. 630 parishes and 677 priests are in Lithuania, 179 parishes and 105 priests in the Republic of Latvia, so that today we can assume 257 parishes in the Soviet Union outside Latvia and Lithuania. In 111 of them 55 priests from Latvia are pastoring, in 131 others 72 so-called „sacerdotes locales“ are active, who acquired a theological education privately and were then ordained priests in Latvia, Lithuania or Poland. Some parishes without their own priests are also occasionally served from Lithuania, and 15 parishes have no regular pastoral care at all.
The ecclesiastical province of Riga, which today is responsible for the entire Soviet Union (with the exception of Lithuania), had 160 priests at the end of 1987. Thus, Riga is the largest diocese in the world in terms of spatial extent. Of the 160 priests

13 received their education in Riga before the Second World War

4 during the war

139 after the Second World War under Soviet rule

4 did not attend seminary

Of the 160 priests in the Riga Archdiocese, 105 are working in Lithuania, including 85 Latvians, nine Poles and three Lithuanians. The remaining eight are new priests from other republics who complete a year of internship in Latvia after ordination. Latvians, Lithuanians, Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, one Russian and one Estonian are among the 55 clergy working outside Latvia.

In 1988, 30 seminarians entered the seminary in Riga, including 14 Poles, four Latvians, five Ukrainians, two Belarusians, three Germans, one Hungarian and one Russian.

In Latvia the age of priests is:

| Under 40 years | 24 priests |
| 41-50 years    | 18 priests |
| 51-60 years    | 30 priests |
| 61-70 years    | 13 priests |
| Over 70 years  | 20 priests |

In contrast, outside Latvia there are mostly younger priests:

| Under 40 years | 36 priests |
| 41-50 years    | 7 priests  |
| 51-60 years    | 10 priests |
| 61-70 years    | 2 priests  |

Thus, 21.9% of the priests in the Riga Metropolitanate are over 60 years of age, but 31.4% of those working in Latvia, compared to only 3.64% of priests working outside Latvia. The higher numbers of priests admitted to the seminary suggest an even more positive development. But this applies only to the clergy incardinated in Riga. The „Sacerdotes locales“ are all very old.

**Places with parishes**
I. Lithuania

630 parishes. We refrain from mentioning all the names because they are evenly distributed throughout the republic.

II. Latvia

III Estonia

1st Tallinn (Reval) 2nd Tartu (Dorpat). Served from Tallinn.

IV. RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic)

1. moscow 2. leningrad 3. prohladnoye 4. novosibirsk 5. prokopyevsk 6. kemerovo 7. chelyabinsk 8. orsk 9. orenburg (7-9 are served from custanaj kazakhstan) 10. omsk 11. tomsk 12. saratov

V. Ukraine

1. Kiev 2. Odessa

Region Shitomir:


Region Lviv:


Region Vinnica:


Region Chmeljickij:

39. polonnoye 40. slavuta 41. gorodok 42. gvardejsk 43. kamenec podolskij 44. kitaj-gorod 45. deražnja 46. holuzubincy 47. muharov 48. minkovcy 49. grečani 50. letičev 51. struga

Region Temapol:

Karpato-Ukraine:

56-93 There are parish churches here for which there are still eleven priests. Five of them are sick and unable to work. Among the six other priests is one Latvian.

So, in total there are 49 Roman Catholic priests in Ukraine, 28 of them from Latvia. In 1987/88, 22 alumni from Ukraine studied in the seminary in Riga, and three new priests did their internship year in Latvia.

VI Belarus


In the latter twelve parishes there are no priests. However, the faithful meet for prayer on Sundays and holidays.

Region Vitebsk

73. glubokaja 74. mosari 75. slobudka 76. dalekije 77. braslav 78. zadorožja 79. naroč 80. miori 81. idolta 82. volkolata

Region Minsk:

83 Minsk 84 Kriviči 85 Budslav 86 Dolginova 87 Kostineviči 88 Krasnoje 89 Derevnoje 90 Rakuv 91 Rubeževiči 92 Višnevo 93 Lyntupy 94 Karnap

Region Brest:

95th Brest 96th Polonecka 97th Iskoldz 98th Stolovici 99th Ruzanik 100th Porozovo 101st Baranoviči 102nd Pinsk 103rd Logišin 104th Černjavcy 105th Pelišče 106th Nedvedica 107th Nova Miš

A total of 56 priests are working in Belarus, including 18 from Latvia. Twelve seminarians and five new priests study in Riga.
VII. Georgia

1. tbilisi 2. shvilisi

In addition to a Polish priest in Tbilisi, there is also a Latvian clergyman. In the border area with Turkey there are about ten villages with Catholic churches where the faithful gather for devotions.

VIII. Moldova

1. kisinev (Kishinev) 2. belcy 3. raskov 4. petropavlovsk

IX. Kazakhstan


The number of priests in Kazakhstan is only nine, three of whom are from Latvia. There are eight seminarians.

X. Tajikistan

1. dušanbe 2. kurgan-tjube 3. leninabad

There are two seminarians studying in the seminary in Riga.

XI. Kyrgyzstan

1. frunze 2. podavčič-bogdan

No Catholic parishes exist in the Union Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
The situation in individual Soviet republics

Lithuania

Lithuania is the only Union Republic of the Soviet Union with a Catholic majority.

Among the peoples of Eastern Europe, Lithuanians were the last to adopt Christianity: The Croats were able to celebrate the 1300th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity as early as 1941, and the Czechs and Slovaks the 1100th anniversary of the arrival of the Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius in the Great Moravian Empire in 1963. The Poles celebrated the millennium of their baptism in 1966; Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians celebrated it in 1988. Latvians and Estonians recalled in 1986 that 800 years earlier the Augustinian monk Meinhard of Segeberg had been consecrated the first apostle of the Livonians by the Archbishop of Bremen, Hartwig II.

Compared to these figures, Christianity in Lithuania is still young. However, even before the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, there were already Christian influences; indeed, as early as 1253, the Grand Duke Mindaugas, whom the chronicles of the Teutonic Knights call Mindowe, had himself baptized.

Geschichtliches

In the Quedlinburg annals Litua is mentioned for the first time in 1008 and the martyrdom of Bishop Brun of Querfurt at the Baltic Pruz-zen is reported. The Nestor Chronicle, written in Kiev before 1116, already mentions the two main tribes of the High and the Low Lituans. „At the end of the 12th century the Lithuanians were the terror of all their neighbors; at times a Lithuanian already held the rule in the Old Russian principality of Polotzk on the middle Düna. At the beginning of the 13th century the Lithuanians represented an important political factor, which all the neighbors had to reckon with, especially the Germans who had been proselytizing at the mouth of the Duna since the end of the 12th century. Marriage connections between Old Russian princes and Lithuanians can be proved already for this period. From this it can be concluded that already at that time there was a prominent layer of lesser and greater lords, whose power must have been sometimes considerable“. (Manfred Hellmann) It was Purst Mindaugas who succeeded in uniting these Lithuanian dominions and principalities. In 1248 Bishop Nicholas of Riga was able to baptize the Lower Lithuanian prince Tautwila, and in 1251 Mindaugas offered the Master of the Order to accept the baptism. Since in 1241 the advance of the Tartars could only be brought to a halt in Silesia, Pope Innocent IV saw the possibility of gaining allies in the east in the Lithuanians and conferred the title of king on Mindaugas: The Livonian Master of the Order brought to the coronation, which was performed by Bishop Heidenreich of Kulm on behalf of the Pope, „two very elaborate crowns“ for his „friend Mindowe“ and his wife Martha (according to the Livonian Reimchronik). A first bishopric for Lithuania was established, whose head, the Teutonic Order priest Christian, was directly subordinate to the Curia. But already on August 5, 1263 Mindaugas was murdered, and thus this first Christian Lithuanian kingdom and its bishopric came to an end.

In their pastoral letter of January 16, 1985, the Lithuanian bishops stated in this regard.

„The history of the state of Lithuania would have taken quite different paths if the crowned ruler had not been murdered. Had the successors of Mindaugas followed him, and had they publicly supported
Christianity, they could have received the royal crown for all times. In this case, the crusades against Lithuania would have had to stop. The relations with the Teutonic Order and later with the neighboring Poles would have been quite different and the fruits of Christian culture could have reached Lithuania much earlier.“ But the Soviet censors deleted (nasty passage from the bishops' letter.

Subsequently, we find a Grand Prince who was Greek Orthodox - the son of Mindaugas, Vaisilkas (Woischelg) - and in the 14th century, when Algirdas (Olgerd) subjugated various Old Russian principalities and ruled over more than half of the former Kiev Empire (including Kiev), also a metropolitan of the Byzantine rite for these areas of his empire. A chronicler of the Teutonic Order attributes to Algirdas the saying that all Russia must belong to Lithuania: Omnis Russia ad Lettwi-nos debearet simplicher pertinere. The actual Lithuanians, however, remained pagans, even though there were marriages of the nobility with Eastern Slavs who were Orthodox. Grand Duke Gediminas had made Lithuania a great power, which Lithuania remained under his successors. When Algirdas died in 1377, Jogaila (Jagiello in Polish) was to reside in Vilnius as grand prince, and the other sons were to rule the various constituent principalities. However, at first there was discord and rebellion, which was also fomented by the Teutonic Order, but Jogaila emerged from the unrest as sole ruler.

In neighboring Poland, King Louis of Hungary, who also wore the crown of Poland, had died in 1382. He left two daughters, of whom Mary was crowned Queen of Hungary in Ofen in October 1382, but was not recognized by the Polish nobility. The latter had the younger daughter of Louis, Hedwig, born only in 1373, crowned Queen of Poland in Cracow in 1384. Although she was betrothed to Duke William of Austria, her mother Elizabeth turned to Jogaila. Despite Hedwig's initial resistance, the Treaty of Krewa was concluded on August 14, 1385, in which Jogaila promised to marry Hedwig and annex his country to Poland, of which he would become king if he was baptized. This happened on February 15, 1386; he was crowned on March 4.

“Jogaila came to Lithuania at the beginning of 1387 with a band of clergy and nobles and began to organize together the baptism of Lithuania and to build churches in Vilnius and other important places in Lithuania. Because of the lack of Lithuanian-speaking priests, it is reported, he himself explained the truths of the faith and translated the Creed and the Lord's Prayer into the Lithuanian language,” the Lithuanian bishops wrote about this in their 1985 pastoral letter.

Gotthold Rhode calls the union of Lithuania with Poland, which was connected with the baptism, „one of the most important events not only in Polish, but in the whole history of Eastern Europe. Through it, the middle state of Poland rose to become a great Eastern European power, acquired a wide field of political and cultural expansion, and acquired the character of a supranational empire, to which other countries soon joined in various forms. It presented the Polish nobility with a difficult leadership task vis-à-vis the Lithuanians and the Orthodox Eastern Slavs, which he did not quite succeed in solving in the case of the latter, but in which he showed great political ability. However, he also inherited the main problem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: The dispute with the Grand Duchy of Moscow over the vast inheritance of the Kievan Empire.“ The Russians later emerged victorious from this dispute.

As early as 1388, Grand Duke Jogaila founded the Vilnius Bishopric, which was followed by the Samogitian Bishopric in 1417. In the prince's son Casimir (1458-1484) the Lithuanians venerate their first saint and patron.

During the Reformation, Lithuania remained Catholic, while present-day Latvia and Estonia became Protestant at that time. Although the majority of Lithuanian nobility had converted to Protestantism,
thanks to the Jesuit College in Vilnius, which later became a university, Lithuania became „a political supremacy of the struggling Roman Church“ (G. Ney). It was not until the third partition of Poland that Lithuania also came under Russian rule and experienced harsh oppression of the Church and the people, especially in the second half of the 19th century. It was then that the solid alliance of church and people was formed, which created a Lithuanian-Catholic consciousness until today, which has experienced a renaissance since 1972 in the „Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church“. Already Catherine II forbade the Lithuanian bishops contacts with Rome. Her son and successor Tsar Paul I subordinated the dioceses of Vilnius and Samogitia to the Archbishopric of Mohilev, which remained in force until the end of the First World War. After the uprising of 1831, the University in Vilnius was closed, as were 32 churches and 20 monasteries. The Russians were even more ruthless after the 1863 uprising. At that time, seven priests were executed and 159 deported. Catholics had no access to public offices, Lithuanian education was forbidden. In the municipality of Krasiai, Cossacks killed over 100 people in 1893.

In February 1918, a national council declared the independence of Lithuania, which, however, lost its capital Vilnius to Poland already in 1920. The difficulties with Poland also caused tensions with the Vatican, but the church was able to reorganize its dioceses and develop a flourishing life, which was disrupted for the first time in 1940 and again in 1944 by the Soviet occupation. In 1925 Lithuania broke off relations with the Vatican because the Vatican had established Vilnius as a Polish ecclesiastical province in the Concordat with Poland. In 1926, by the bull „Lituanorum gente“, Lithuania became an ecclesiastical province within its then state borders, with the metropolitan see in Kaunas (680000 Catholics) and the suffragan dioceses of Telsiai (380000), Paneve-zyys (378000), Vilkaviskis (320000) and Kaišiadorys (320 000 Catholics). The few Catholics of the Memel region form a free prelature of Memel. In 1927 there was a concordat between Lithuania and the Vatican. The Jesuits, who had done so much for Lithuania with the University of Vilnius, also returned to independent Lithuania at that time. On the feast of St. Ignatius in 1922 (July 31) the then Polish Jesuit General Fr. Ledochowski instructed the Provincial of the Low German Province, Fr. Bley, to visit the bishops in Lithuania. In September Fr. Bley stayed in Lithuania and visited the bishops from September 21 to 24. He reported about it to Rome, where already on November 1 of the same year General Ledochowski ordered to start the mission in Lithuania from the Low German Province. In fact, there was talk of a „taquam Missio Lithuania“, an expression that met with opposition in Lithuania as a Catholic country, since they did not want to be equated with missionary or even pagan countries with this word. Thus, the expression „Missio Lithuania“ was avoided in public whenever possible. In spring 1923 the first Low German Jesuits came to Kaunas, which had an old religious tradition with a Jesuit church.

Already on June 6th 1923 the Order received the old Jesuit church and parts of the college of the old Society of Jesus for use, on February 11th 1924 even as property. Already at the beginning of the school year 1924/25 the Jesuits could establish in these premises a grammar school according to the curricula of the Lithuanian schools, whose first rector became Father Johannes Kipp. But the following year brought a heavy setback, when in the elections in May 1926 the Catholic parties lost their majority in the „Sejmas“, the Lithuanian“! Parliament, and the new government took a decidedly anti-church course. There was agitation against the Catholic Church and its orders, and even demands for the expulsion of the Jesuits from Lithuania, which led to great unrest among the population. A bloodless coup d'état by the military brought the old president Antanas Sme-tona to the head of the state again shortly before Christmas 1926. He was not only a supporter of the Jesuits, but also sent his son to the Kaunas College. When he was among the first graduating class in 1930, the president personally distributed the certificates to all the graduates. At that time the high school had 300 students. The number increased to 520 by the 1933/34 school year.

The work of the Fathers soon bore fruit for the Order: already in 1929 a Lithuanian Novitiate could be
established, and already on March 25, 1930, in the canonical sense, a Lithuanian Province of the
Order with Father Johannes Kipp as the first Provincial. With this Lithuanian Jesuit Province also
Estonia was united in 1930. But the Order General in Rome left the young Province still completely to
the care of the East German Province established on January 18th 1931. Only on March 12, 1936
Lithuania became an independent Vice-Province. At that time the Jesuits of Lithuania numbered
twelve priests, 33 scholastics and 43 brothers. At that time only five Fathers and two Brothers from
the East German Province were still in the country. Until the resettlement of the Germans from
Lithuania in 1941 all had returned to their homeland. It speaks for the independence that already in
the school year 1933/34 the teachers at the college were almost all Lithuanians.

In 1940, the year of the first Soviet occupation, 85 percent of the population of Lithuania was Catholic.
There were 37 men's orders with 643 fathers and brothers; 85 women's orders with 1000 sisters; 71
Catholic schools and kindergartens; 20 orphanages; two hospitals; 25 homes for the elderly; 32
periodicals; and seven publishing houses.

In 1940 Catholic Lithuania had 1487 diocesan and 152 religious priests. They were subjected to
severe harassment and restrictions:

Church properties were declared state property. In addition to the buildings and land, everything
listed in the inventory of the churches, i.e. the bells, crosses, books, sacred utensils and paraments,
were subject to nationalization. - The use of the church was allowed only after payment of a rent. This
was calculated according to the volume of the building and in the same way as the fees for luxury
restaurants and night clubs. - For the use of the bells, the church utensils, the paraments a certain fee
was to be paid.

Outside the church, religious functions were prohibited; acts of worship held outdoors, in cemeteries,
and in private homes were considered unlawful and were severely punished.

On August 31, 1940, the People's Commissar for Education informed all school principals:

„With the beginning of the present school year, prayers before and after lessons are abolished in all
schools. From the schools must be removed all signs of cult and of the former regime, femer all
effigies of persons whose ideology and activity are contrary to the foundation of socialist Lithuania....
Schools must be decorated with the coat of arms of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and with
the effigies of the leaders of the world's working class, Lenin and Stalin. The Lithuanian national
anthem must no longer be sung. The anthem of the Soviet Republic of Lithuania is the International.``

On December 12, Vilnius' intelligence chief wrote to all authorities, „Comrades, on December 25 and
26, Catholics celebrate feasts they call Christmas. During these feasts, which begin on the night of
December 24-25, Masses are celebrated in churches and sermons are preached. The two days are
considered by the faithful as great feasts, that is, days of rest. The counter-revolutionary national
element and especially the clergy will take advantage of these feast days for their anti-Soviet activity
and will try, first of all:

(a) interrupt work in factories and schools,

b) to make propaganda against participation in the elections, to give more or less spiritually disguised
speeches, either by small-scale propaganda to individuals, or to groups of the faithful visiting
churches, vestries, or parsonages,
c) to distribute and disseminate counter-revolutionary pamphlets under religious or other pretexts,

d) to cause street rallies or stage agitations of any kind.

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In order to close the street to incidents of this kind you shall:

1. order the network of intelligence agents to keep you informed of all anti-Soviet preparations by the clergy and circles close to them, setting for the days of December 20-27 repeated meetings with the said agents,

2. to take the necessary measures to ensure the normal port of work in the factories and schools,

3. to organize motorized patrols during the night hours of December 23, 24, 25 and 26 and to increase the number of guards in the cities, for this purpose, in cooperation with the secretary of the district party committee, to enlist the active elements of the party and the communist youth and to give them the necessary instructions for this purpose,

4. to take minutes of all incidents of a provocative character and to report them to me immediately."

For the supervision of the priests, it had been previously determined:

„1. the making of a complete register of all the priests of the district;

2. in it shall also appear the names of the leaders of Catholic organizations and associations.

3. immediately, by means of agents, a campaign is to be begun from among the members of the parishes and the personnel of the episcopal curia of your district.

4. at all costs, monitor those priests and church employees (sextons, organists) who are in close contact with the offices of Catholic associations and groups. Seek to enlist them as news agents. Explain to them that they are to cause divisions within Catholic organizations.

5. Track down priests and leaders of associations who maintain relations with German emissaries. Clarify the nature of such relationships.

6. in all districts where monasteries exist, a register of religious is to be compiled. These, and especially their superiors, are to be monitored. A network of intelligence agents is to be organized within the religious communities.

7. find out where priests and students meet to carry out their oppositional activities. In the work of decomposition, we shall make use of the students of the upper grades of high school.

8. in the forthcoming collection of signatures from the population by priests and active members of Catholic associations to petition the government for the preservation of religious instruction in schools, identify and monitor the organizers of this activity."

In 1944, 257 priests fled to the West; in 1946, 176 resettled in Poland. Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius was shot in 1946 after cruel torture.

Between 1946 and 1947, 330 priests were deported to Siberia. Among them were Bishops Ramanauskas and Matulionis. Only 120 priests returned in 1956.
In 1960 there were only 929 priests in Lithuania, in 1988 about 660, i.e. the number has decreased to less than half compared to the pre-war period. In 1940 there were four seminaries, a fifth was under construction; today there is one in Kaunas, where the KGB shadowed seminarians and decided on admissions until 1988.

Since the Soviet occupation, 484 Catholic churches and chapels have been misappropriated and profaned in Lithuania, 23 of them in Vilnius and 22 in Kaunas. Vilnius Cathedral was a picture gallery, Casimir Church an atheistic museum, before both churches were returned to the Vilnius Archdiocese at the end of 1988.

The diocesan administrators were almost completely dependent on the state authorities in their work - despite the separation of church and state: among other things, they were not allowed to administer Confirmation without state permission. The priests were only „cult“ priests; they were forbidden any religious instruction, even on the occasion of private visits to parishioners, since the Soviet constitution forbade religious instruction before the age of 18.

For church buildings - they were all expropriated by the state! - one percent of the value of the building had to be paid annually as rent; electric power was six times more expensive than for private houses, the insurance premium three times higher than for buildings in the city.

There was no official church press among the Catholic Lithuanian people until 1989. Religious literature was not available in a single bookstore. During house searches, religious literature was often searched for. The secret production of prayer books and catechisms was punishable by imprisonment. The sale of devotional objects was prohibited even on church property.

Children and young people under the age of 18 were not allowed to serve as altar servers, nor were they allowed to participate in the church choir or play the organ. Religious students were subjected to constant discrimination at school; very often they were also threatened with a ban on university studies. Since 1945, 2000 Lithuanian religious teachers have had to give up their posts.

Even after de-Stalinization, during the reign of

Nikita Khrushchev, the communist terror continued. Eleven priests went to the gulag at that time. Bishops Vincentas Sladkevicius (in 1959) and Julijonas Steponavicius (in 1961) were exiled. In 1961 also the church „Mary, Queen of Peace“ in Memel, newly built by the faithful, was closed, its builder arrested.

Nevertheless, in the 60's there was a religious rebirth, inseparable from the „Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church“. In 1972 the first issue appeared, and since then until 1988 another 78 numbers. In their 1982 issue No. 51, the editors wrote: „This year it has been ten years since a stubborn struggle began: between the lawless priests and the faithful of Lithuania, on the one hand, and the atheistic authorities, supported by the KGB, the administrative government apparatus, and the mass media, on the other. Here are the most characteristic moments of the struggle:

On February 7, 1972, the priests and the faithful of Lithuania sent to the Soviet government, through the UN, a memorandum with 17000 signatures, shedding light on the suppressed situation of the Lithuanian Catholic Church and obtaining the restitution of freedom. However, the Soviet government, through blackmail, got the bishops to condemn this memorandum. However, the movement for the freedom of the Church could not stop the Soviet government.
On March 19, 1972, the first number of the „Chronicle of the Catholic Church of Lithuania“ was published. The self-immolation of Romas Kalanta on May 14, 1972, and the demonstrations of the youth that lasted for several days, although unrelated to the movement of religious revival, undoubtedly favored it.

In an effort to force the priests to relent, the Soviet government replaced the plenipotentiary of the Council for Religious Affairs, KGR official Rugienis, with the more tolerant party official Kazimieras Tumenas. However, his mission did not succeed.

Here are some stages of Lithuania's rebirth:

In 1972, a secret seminary began to organize in Lithuania in response to KGB activity at the Kaunas Interdiocesan Seminary. The idea matured among the clergy that it could not be tolerated that young men rejected by the KGB could not continue their studies and receive ordination. The foundation of this seminary was one of the most positive steps in the post-war life of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Honor initiators were young men who had not been admitted to the seminary by the KGB. This seminary existed until 1988.

On November 19-20, 1973, the KGB dealt a heavy blow to the underground of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Numerous house searches and some arrests made the official atheists triumph: „There will be no more prayer books, the „Chronicle of the Catholic Church of Lithuania“ is destroyed.“ However, one after another new publications appeared: „Aura“ („The Dawn“), „Dievas ir Tevyne“ („God and Fatherland“), „Tiesos Kelias“ („The Way of Truth“), „Rupintojelis“ („The Man of Sorrows“), etc. It was also possible to continue publishing the Chronicle underground.

Admirably, the secret women of the order have also been active. Some of them actively participated in the struggle for the freedom of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, others quietly instructed the children, gathered the youth around them in groups, still others supported the active ones with prayers and sacrifices. „It is difficult to thank in words all those who persistently and sacrificially did and continue to do the work of God. It was not without reason that the KGB got into such a state of flux: it began to persecute the secret women's monasteries, to spy in them, and it tried to recruit agents for itself in the monasteries, etc.,“ writes the „Chronicle."

Since August 1, 1975, the Helsinki Final Act has given a firmer foundation to the struggling Lithuanian Catholic Church. By invoking the CSCE Final Act, it had become possible to demand elementary human rights and humanity as something that had also been promised by Moscow before the whole world.

On July 28, 1976, the Lithuanian Soviet Republic issued a decree confirming the „Regulations on Religious Associations“. However, the government officials concealed these provisions for years in order not to cause protests among the priests and believers. The adoption of the decree, however, testifies to the fact that the Soviet government in Moscow not only continued but intensified the struggle against the believers in Lithuania and legally legitimized the discrimination practiced for many years. In the summer of 1977, during the preparations of the new legislation of the Lithuanian SSR, the faithful of Lithuania, the priests and even the bishops submitted their proposals to the Party. However, the Party did not respond to them, and paragraph 50, which discriminated against the faithful, was left in the legislation: Believers were granted only the right to „practice religious cults,“ but the official godless were given the right to „carry on atheistic propaganda."
The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Believers

On November 13, 1978, the „Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Faithful“ was established in Lithuania. The priests and the faithful received the establishment of the Committee with preude, but there were also those who expected the members of the Committee to be arrested soon. „One must thank the compatriots in Lithuania and in the West for understanding and appreciating the activity of this Committee of Catholics,“ writes the „Chronicle.“

The spiritual rebirth of Lithuania's faithful was greatly helped, above all, by Pope John Paul II, who on several occasions expressed his special attention to Lithuania. Both the example of the Holy Father and his encouraging words gave strength to the priests and faithful to defend vigorously the rights of the Catholic Church and to remain faithful to Christ. In 1979, 522 priests and the two bishops who had been exiled showed solidarity with Document No. 5 of the Catholic „Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Faithful“ and spoke out against the „Regulations on Religious Associations.“ This mass protest of the priests showed that the clergy of Lithuania, apart from a small part that collaborated with the KGB, was not broken. The KGB probably realized this as well and therefore began to recruit even more intensively among the clergy, hoping to bring the priests of Lithuania to their knees. In 1980, the faithful and the priests of Lithuania began a broad action against alcoholism among the people. The Soviet government not only refused to support this action, but even purposefully interfered with it. It was not allowed to establish a Catholic temperance association. The bishops of Lithuania, who had initially shown initiative in cooperating, withdrew from this action after the Soviet government interfered. Only the administrator of the diocese of Telsiai did not give in.

A significant event in the life of the Lithuanian Catholic Church was also the establishment of parish councils. The Soviet government saw in it a danger from the very beginning and started a direct struggle against the parish councils. The bishops, who were still exiled at that time, approved the parish councils and they became core groups in every diocese, playing a very important role in the life of the dioceses and in the struggle for the rights of the Church. A clear example of this is the letter of May 3, 1981, from the parish councils of all dioceses opposing government interference in the administration of parishes and the agitation of parish committees against parish priests. The Soviet government's reaction to the increasingly widespread religious revival in Lithuania was not only more intensive propagandistic work, but also included direct coercive actions, for example against pilgrimages. For example, the KGB spread the rumor of a swine fever raging in the Siluva area to prevent religious processions to Siluva. The KGB, the militia and even the military were used for the action.

When the 500th anniversary of St. Casimir's death was celebrated in 1984, there was much harassment. The bishops were allowed to issue only a small calendar, a medal and a jubilee picture that year, and there were difficulties with that, too. A biography of the saint prepared by the liturgical commission was not allowed to appear. Although the calendar had already been printed in the summer of 1983, the government delayed its publication until after the beginning of the celebrations on March 4, 1984. Each priest received only 70 little pictures of St. Casimir, each parish only a few medals and a few copies of the small calendar, whose circulation was only 4000. Instead, before the jubilee, a campaign began in the press and radio against St. Casimir and his veneration.

„The Church has always misused the veneration of saints for its political and ideological struggle. The commemoration of Casimir's death and canonization is organized by the ultra-right activists of the
The Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union

Lithuanian bourgeoisie in emigration and the clerical extremists in the Lithuanian Catholic Church, “the program „Kalba Vilnius“ („This is Vilnius“) said at the time. Despite various invitations, a visit by the Pope in 1984 was out of the question. That he would have liked to go to Vilnius, John Paul II explicitly stated during a speech in Rome. Bishops L. Pavilonis, A. Vaicius, J. Steponavicius and V. Sladkevicius celebrated in the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Vilnius on March 3, 1984. The Lithuanian homily was preached by the administrator of the Panevezys diocese, and the Polish homily by the administrator of the Vilnius archdiocese.

By express order of the government, the main service for Lithuanians and Poles was celebrated together, even though there was not enough space for one people. Although the loudspeakers of the church had been working for ten years, at the time of the Jubilee service the loudspeakers were switched off, so that the many people outside the door and also the priests in the chancel did not hear anything at all. Pope John Paul II's telegram, which he had addressed at that time to the bishops and all the participants in the celebrations, could not be read out. Bishop L. Povilonis was given it only after the celebrations. It was not proclaimed even during the solemn service the following day. On the eve of the Jubilee celebrations, in St. Peter and Paul's Church, where many priests were already gathered, not a single sermon was allowed to be preached and not a word was said about the celebrations of the following day. Nor was it permitted to bring to the

more priests than usual to hear confessions. People agonized in the rows in front of the confessionals all day, both the night before and during the celebrations. Some of them stood in long setdangen from 10 a.m. to 5 or 6 p.m. to be able to confess. St. Casimir's Church, which was an atheist museum, was strictly guarded. For the children, on March 4, a Sunday, various events were organized by the schools to keep them away from the churches. In many places, priests were already warned at the end of February to hold Casimir celebrations in churches. Only services without any national coloration were allowed. In the course of the celebrations, some unpleasant incidents occurred in many places.

Young people, in particular, were harassed at work and at school for participating in the anniversary services. During the closing ceremonies of the Casimir Jubilee, a riot broke out in the church of St. Peter and Paul after the evening mass on August 23. The parish priest of Pociuneliai, Antanas Jokubauskas, ascended to the pulpit to speak as a guest preacher. He had hardly begun to speak when the pastor of the church, the lecturer of the Kaunas Seminary, Prancikus Vaicekonis, came out of the sacristy, started shouting and pointing with his hands for the organ to play and for the people to go home. But the people did not move, and the organ remained silent. The preacher continued to speak calmly. The priest, who was loyal to the regime and had lost his temper, reached for the microphone that was in the presbytery, but a man from the crowd held him back and tactfully asked him not to disturb the sermon. When the priest saw that the people were not leaving and that the visiting priest was continuing to speak, he began to berate the preacher, „Believers, don't listen to him! He is a hooligan, he is not a real priest! I don't know him. The church is no place for a public meeting...!“

Suddenly, one light after another went out. Twilight arose in the church. When Jakubauskas began to talk about the incarcerated priests, the priest sent two men in choir robes to bring the preacher down from the pulpit. As they were about to climb into the pulpit, someone from the crowd quickly jumped in and stopped one of the altar boys. but the other was already up by the preacher and brought him down. At that moment, the priest jumped into the crowd and wanted to advance to the pulpit. At the beginning, the faithful moved aside and made room, but later the whole crowd advanced and pushed the agitated priest back to the chancel. When the priest A. Jokubauskas came from the pulpit, the whole church began to applaud. It is not the custom in Lithuania to applaud in church, but in this case, since there was no other way to testify approval to the preacher, the faithful, regardless of all traditions, clapped their hands so tumultuously that one could not even hear the priest loudly scolding
the preacher and the crowd. No sooner had the clapping calmed down a bit than the priest berated the faithful and the preacher even louder. To silence the priest, the people started clapping again. And so it went on alternately. When the people realized that their priest was not going to stop scolding them, they began to sing together the song „Mary, Mary,“ which has become a kind of church national anthem. „It was a sad and eerie sight. It would be much easier to bear to see a militia officer or a government official dragging a priest around or beating him than this one...,“ the „Chronicle“ wrote about it. In the evening of the next day, during the announcement of the Holy Mass, the parish priest recalled yesterday's incident and declared that the Church was not a place for politics and public meetings, although the priest A. Joku-bauskas had not dealt with politics in his homily, but with the problems of the Church in Lithuania. During the Holy Mass, the pastor of Turgeliai, Dean K. Vaicionis, gave the homily. After speaking briefly about St. Casimir at the beginning, he spoke to the greatest astonishment of the faithful about Lithuania being „incorporated into the great Soviet Union,“ about the need to „get along with our Russian brothers,“ about the „hope that in one of the churches of Vilnius services will be introduced in Russian,“ and about the fact that „the most striking feature of St. Casimir's government in Lithuania was the great concern for the catechization of the Russians.“ The impression was created among the faithful that the main purpose of the sermon was to prove that the Lithuanian people and the „Russian brothers“ had always and forever been the best of friends. Many believers laughed, the others shrugged their shoulders, the third did not know what to think.

On the last day of the celebration there was another surprise. Before the High Mass, the parish priest, Fr. Vaicekonis, asked the faithful to go to the churchyard to greet the arriving bishops. The people lined up in the churchyard up to the big entrance gate and even further up to the street and waited for the guests. After waiting for a while, the pilgrims suddenly heard that the service was beginning in the church. It turned out that the bishops had come through the side gate and entered the church through the sacristy. Those who had been waiting at the main gate on the priest's instructions felt betrayed. The instruction in Lithuanian that the bishops should enter the church through the side gate before the service was given, as far as is known, by the security officers observing the service. During Bishop Vaicius's sermon, the loudspeaker „accidentally“ failed.

When the 600th anniversary of the Christianization of Lithuania was celebrated in 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev was already General Secretary in Moscow. Already in 1986, numerous priests of the Lithuanian diocese had turned to their bishops and asked:

1. to take more care of the seminary in Kaunas, that only suitable candidates should be admitted and only suitable lecturers should teach.

2) The priests demanded that the Instruction of the Congregation for the Clergy „Quidam episcopi“ of March 8, 1984, which prohibits political activity by priests, be followed.

They asked that the government of the Soviet Union allow the exiled Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavicius, to administer and lead his diocese.

4) They also asked Moscow to allow religious education, which is forbidden until the age of 18.

5. to demand the cessation of discrimination and terrorization of believing citizens, especially the younger generation.

6. to demand the return of confiscated churches and the construction of new houses of worship.
7. to obtain the release of the arrested priests Svarinskas, Tamkevicius and Matulionis, as well as lay believers.

8. to demand for believers the same freedom of opinion, speech and conviction that atheists enjoy.

9. to oppose the government's involvement in the selection of candidates for the Kaunas seminary; and

10. not to accept government interference in the appointment of clergy and filling of church offices.

The world also learned how justified these demands were from other Lithuanian samizdat publications. With astonishing openness, Lithuanians had been protesting for years:

After the arrest of priests Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevicius, more than 130,000 Lithuanians wrote to demand their release. In Memel, about 150,000 people had already demanded the return of the Church of Mary Queen of Peace in 1979. In 1987, 76000 Catholics signed a petition to the authorities when they feared the closure of the Church of Christ the King. If the trials of the arrested priests had taken place anywhere other than Vilnius, the whole world would surely have protested against the predatory manner of these trials and the assaults against believers who wanted to come to the courtroom. Young priests wrote about how they were recruited by the KGB in the seminary. The harassment of churches and brutal attacks on parish houses did not stop even in the first years of Gorbachev's term. In 1986, for example, the priest Juozas Zdebskis died in a „car accident.” He had been one of the founders of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Faithful in 1978.

After Zdebskis’ death, Lithuanian state television broadcast a different version of the accident for domestic viewers than TASS did for foreign viewers. No information was given about the „milk truck” with which the priest's car collided and its driver. Therefore, on April 23, 1986, the underground magazine „Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church” wrote in its No. 70: „The pushing down of priest B. Laurinavicius under the wheels of a truck, the sadistic murder of priests L. Sapoka and Mazeika, the liquidation of the Helsinki group of Lithuania, the efforts to destroy at any cost the Committee of Catholics for the Defense of the Rights of the Faithful, the continuous excesses of the State Security Service against priest J. Zdebskis, allow the assumption that this car accident was not a coincidence, but a carefully prepared and executed act of violence, all the more so because it was also repeatedly prevented from recovering the body and personal belongings of priest J. Zdebskis.

After the accident, the car of the priest J. Zdebskis was taken to the traffic police of Salcininkai and examined there. On the day he died, the phone of the Rudamina rectory was switched off, and those close to him did not learn of the car accident until a day later. The security guards watched all the funeral proceedings very closely. The cars of the security service intrusively followed those young people who were attending the funeral. Even when they were already back home after the funeral, the security agents did not disregard them for a long time: wherever they went, the security agents followed them from morning till night.”

At the end of 1986, the „Chronicle” reported:

„On the night of October 17, 1986, the priest of Pusalotas, Albinas Pipiras (61 years old), was assaulted and seriously injured. Even before that, A. Pipiras had been harassed by telephone by unknown malefactors. In August, three men and a woman tore open the window in broad daylight and entered the rectory. One of the men was carrying a revolver. Only when they noticed several people in the next room did the intruders escape. The incident was reported to the Pasvalys rayon militia, which did not respond. About a week before the October 17 attack, the dog that had been guarding the rectory was poisoned.
On the night of October 17, four people spent the night in the rectory: The priest, his ten-year-old godchild, the priest's 80-year-old aunt and the sacristan Rimutus Kudarauskas. The perpetrator tore open a window on the street side and entered the room where the priest's underage relative was sleeping. After ordering the boy to cover his head and lie still, he broke into the next room where R. Kudarauskas was sleeping. Kudarauska was beaten up and knocked unconscious.

Later, a pool of blood was found in the room. When the priest A. Pipiras heard the noise in the neighboring room, he turned on the light and saw a man with a mask in front of him, holding a knife in one hand and a small axe in the other. Priest A. Pipiras tore the mask from the intruder's face. The robber knocked the priest to the ground with a few axe blows to the head, injuring him severely. With his skull bone smashed in and his right arm dislocated, the priest was thrown down into the cellar. When the criminal found 1500 rubles, he ordered the sacristan, who had awakened from unconsciousness, to drive him to Memel by car. On the way he held the knife and the axe in his hand, but fell asleep in the car because he had drunk too much. So Kudarauskas escaped, and brought militia arrested the criminal, who was a Georgian. The severely injured priest underwent surgery on his head and remained alive.... The militia assumed that he was a „common” criminal and thief who had acted alone. However, the witnesses in the rectory had seen and heard several people, including three men smoking, who were waiting under the window...

So even in 1987 there was no sign of perestroika in Lithuania. There was „primitive atheistic materialism” against the anniversary celebration. This is how the speaker of the CC of the CP of Lithuania. J. Sabakauskas, „considered Christian baptism as the beginning of all misfortunes for Lithuania, but the Russian occupation as the epoch of national independence." Nevertheless, at a scientific conference in the State Library in Vilnius in January 1987, the philosopher B. Genzelis assessed „the introduction of Christianity“ as follows: In the cultural sector, the influence of Christianity was positive: the cultural goods created by the peoples of Western Europe became accessible to Lithuanians as well. The political significance was allegedly negative because of the increased national influence of Poland (although it was concealed that Catholic baptism reduced the danger of becoming Russian). On the religious sector, the atheist philosopher honorably refused to judge the importance of Lithuanian Catholic baptism, because he could not objectively judge it as a philosopher of the materialistic-atheistic direction (according to the Chronicle).

Em other speaker declared that a „bulldozer atheism“ had done great damage to Lithuanian culture by destroying churches, chapels and works of art. Other scholars demanded historically honest accounts of Lithuanian history, to which the „Chronicle“ declared: „Lithuanian Catholics know that, notwithstanding all the reforms and campaigns of „openness“ proclaimed by M. Gorbacev, there are no possibilities for such an objective assessment in today's atheist-ruled Lithuania."

Today it is already history that Pope John Paul II was banned from entering the country also for this jubilee, after he was already barred to Riga for the Casimir jubilee in 1984 and for the 800th anniversary of the Christianization of Latvia in 1986. The functionary Edvardas Juzenas also gave the reasons for this:

- Radio Vatican's anti-Soviet propaganda, especially in the Lithuanian broadcasts.
- The Vatican criticism of liberation theology.
- The hitherto unresolved status of the Archdiocese of Vilnius (still listed as „Polonia” in the Annuario Pontificio).
The pope's support of Lithuanian emigrants.

The SSR Lithuania remained practically completely closed to ecclesiastical visitors from the West during the Jubilee celebrations. Even the archbishop of Wilna's Austrian twin city of Salzburg, Dr. Karl Berg, was not given permission to enter. Only Auxiliary Bishop Cakuls from Riga was able to represent Latvia's Catholics. The head of the foreign office of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Filaret, was also allowed to attend, and of course, as guests of honor, the plenipotentiaries for religious affairs, Petras Anilionis from Vilnius and his colleague Konstantin Charcev from Moscow. Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila was also allowed to visit Vilnius (and Riga) only briefly in mid-July (at the invitation of the Moscow Patriarchate), but had no opportunities to meet with Lithuanian Catholics.

The well-known dissident Nijole Sadunaite explained in an interview available to us on video that not even the seminarians in Kaunas were allowed to meet with the cardinal. About the participation of Anilionis and Charcev, Sadunaite said, „For Lithuanian Catholics, it was a slap in the face. The faithful people had to freeze outside in the rain and dirt, but the gravediggers of the Church, Charcev and Anilionis, sat on the thrones as guests of honor.”

During the celebrations in Lithuania, which were only allowed to take place in Vilnius at the same time as the celebrations in Rome, the bishops compared the history of the Church of Lithuania to the seasons in homilies. „In this comparison, the winter that is now prevailing coincides with the forced communist rule, under which everything was frozen.

The Neue Züricher Zeitung of June 29, 1987, stated: „The winter now prevailing coincides in this comparison with communist coercion, under which everything is frozen, but the seedlings of life are not extinguished, but stand ready for a new spring.

This spring came in 1988. In the summer of 1988, Lithuania received a cardinal, Vincentas Sladkevicius, who clearly expressed his ideas. Arrested priests were released, churches returned, and the last incapacitated bishop, Grelijonas Steponavicius, returned to his diocese of Vilnius.

The State of the Church in Lithuania

I. Hopeful changes and painful traces

For decades, Catholics and confessors of other faith communities in our country were excluded from public life, confined to the church walls, the boundary posts of churchyards and cemeteries. The changes in public life that have now arisen invite and require us - the hierarchy, the priests, the faithful, to re-examine our position in the society of the people. In a few months many prohibitions of speech have fallen, many taboos have been reversed. It has turned out that it is not true that the people have become almost universally atheistic, and that Christian values are no longer in demand.

In the past two years some outstanding cultural figures of other Soviet republics, and this year also first-rate intellectuals of our republic, have spoken out loudly about the importance of religious faith for the life and morals of the people. Now it is publicly acknowledged that the soul of our people has been seriously damaged not only by forced collectivization of agriculture and unfavorable
urbanization, but also by ruthless atheization. People's conscience was mutilated because they had to speak not what they thought and do not what they said; because they had to despise what was sacred to their parents and perhaps to themselves. Thank God, personalities of enlightened spirit recognized this and proclaimed from the highest places: „You can't go on living like this!“ And a current has broken through. Has exposed many injustices of the recent past, many mistakes and crimes, and demands punishment for them. How does the Church see it?

The Church does not propagate revenge, even if it recognizes that crimes against humanity, against freedom and life of innocent people cannot be carelessly forgotten. By striving for a spiritual and inner self-purification of society, the Church expects above all the awakening of conscience. The Church and the faithful will respect those people who of their own accord renounce honorary titles, medals, privileges acquired in the service of the destruction of innocent people, and accept the imposed punishment as purification. Hardly have there been believers among the people who organized or carried out the deportations, tortured the arrested, signed death sentences or sentences of long exile. Unfortunately, there were, or perhaps there are even now, intimidated believers among the agents - in the shameless army of denunciators and secret informers who collaborated in those terrible atrocities and even now support the repressive mechanism. We warn these faithful people, especially the church workers, with the greatest emphasis: do not deceive yourselves, do not gloss over your pusillanimity, consider the painful responsibility before God! No price should be too high, so that you can finally feel yourselves as free people with a good conscience!

At the moment, two fateful periods of the country's recent history are constantly mentioned: Personality cult of the dictator and the torpor or stagnation. How did these periods affect the life of the Church?

During the dictator's cult of personality, the Church suffered. Four out of five bishops and one out of three priests in Lithuania were arrested and imprisoned (Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius was shot, Archbishop Mecislovas Reinys died in prison).

Arrested and exiled were many active members of church organizations. Creative Christian culture, many faithful believers, the entire Catholic press, schools, organizations, fraternities were banned, the religious were dispersed, not a few churches and three seminaries were closed, the monastery and seminary libraries were confiscated. The Church suffered painfully, but during this period it remained the only institution in the entire country that did not glorify the dictator. During the thaw after the dictator's death, many of those who remained alive returned to their homes, but neither the religious press, nor schools, nor associations were allowed back, and churches were once again locked up and wayside crosses and wayside shrines were systematically destroyed. The fight against faith in the press and in schools was intensified, intellectuals and employees were subjected to anti-religious pressures; children and young people were chased away from the altars by threats, and because the bishop of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavicius, protested against this, he was banished to Zagare and is still not allowed to exercise his office.

During the stagnation period, there was a great effort to impose the rigidity on the church as well. Through the so-called registration of clergy and other channels, atheist officials have consistently ensured that churches in the cities and other important ecclesiastical posts have been filled, as far as possible, by those priests who are willing to be quiet and immobile in pastoral care, who, even if they make renovations and keep the church walls clean and shiny, are not militantly committed to souls. Three priests have been punished with imprisonment for children's catechesis, and three others for starting the „glasnost“ era „too early.“
Stagnation has taken very deep roots in a quarter of a century and at present both the All-Union Council for Religious Affairs and some representatives in our Republic find it very difficult to change to a dialogue with the Church, still want to discuss and administer; high officials still advocate candidates of stagnation to responsible posts. And on the other hand, even if refreshing winds of renewal are already blowing in the sector of culture and information, many church workers are full of fear, do not believe in the utmost of transformation and therefore do not dare to speak more courageously, nor do they try to return to the positions that were forcibly snatched away.

II. contemporary tasks of the priests and faithful

History shows that the Church is able to survive under various economic and governmental systems. But the Church must not resign herself to having the spheres of her activity unjustly curtailed, to having human rights violated. History shows that freedom was never given to anyone and never given to anyone, but that individuals, as well as society, when circumstances are favorable, must themselves act as free people. Therefore, today we cannot wait any longer for the new legal regulations of the church questions, which have been promised for three years and postponed again and again, because up to now not even projects have been presented! The responsible high authorities have declared that the previous regulations are obsolete and we will treat them as such. Therefore: 1. the Bishops' Conference, bishops, diocesan administrators and the management of the seminary will from now on regularly notify the plenipotentiaries of the Council for Religious Affairs of their decisions on appointments of clergy, admissions to the seminary, but will not wait for prior agreement. Since the Soviet government has annulled the Concordat of the Republic of Lithuania with the Apostolic See and has declared non-interference in the canonical activity of the Church, the administration of these matters by the authority of the Council for Religious Affairs, by the district government and other bodies has no legal basis and must cease. Only in this way can a step toward the rule of law be taken in the ecclesiastical sphere, which was the subject of an important forum the other day. 2. priests, parish priests and chaplains (and other priests who assist them) will publicly carry out children's catechesis and religious education for young people, as they did from 1945 to 1947. The parish priests will conduct services for school youth at the beginning and at the end of the school year, winter and spring holidays, major holidays, and similar occasions, after appropriate prior notice. Although the school is separated from the Church, the pupils and students are not separated from it by any law, and the Church is bound to their pastoral care (cf. CIC, can. 773-780). The hierarchy, the clergy and the faithful will not cease to demand that the cradle of Christianity in Lithuania - the Cathedral Church of Vilnius - be returned to the faithful, that the desecration of the Church of St. Casimir, so precious to all, be ended, that as soon as possible the church in Klaipeda be restored and returned, that permits be granted for the building of new churches where, according to the decision of the hierarchy, they are necessary for the faithful: In the new towns and the new residential areas of the large cities. The churches will be built by the faithful through their sacrifices. They will not burden the state finances. 4. we will not stop knocking on all the competent authorities to restore the freedom of the religious press. Let us be allotted enough paper every year, according to the share of believers in the total national economy, and then we - Hierarchy and the believers - will decide for which publications and how many editions we will use the paper. Since the state confiscated hundreds of ecclesiastical buildings and more than a dozen printing houses 40 years ago, it should not pretend that it is giving something when it gives rooms for the ecclesiastical press and polygraphy, diocesan libraries, church museums, Catholic information centers, club rooms for believers and the like, but that it is merely righting a great wrong. 5. the parish priests of opened churches ring the bells normally again. Priests openly escort the dead with religious signs in places where pedestrian traffic on the street is not prohibited. 6. the faithful laity may be
prepared to take up the care of the elderly, invalids, orphans, the sick and others in need of help by taking advantage of cooperative forms, by establishing informal groups and also individually, to organize leisure time with religiously oriented excursions and alcohol-free evenings for children and young people of faithful families, to organize pilgrimages and educational trips and the like. We endorse the government's sobriety drive, exhort priests to set a good example of genuine sobriety, to hold sobriety days and weeks in parishes, to establish ecclesiastical sobriety fraternities following the example of Bishop M. Valancius. We invite the faithful to participate in this vital work in every way possible.

7 We exhort the faithful laity, in accordance with the decisions of the IL Vatican Council (Dogm. Const. on the Church, nn. 36-37), to support in the way they can the general efforts of renewal and democratization, and to represent in the appropriate movements the Catholic concerns enumerated here and still pending. In 1940 and 1948, an immeasurable amount was taken away from the Church in one fell swoop. It would be fair to expect that in these years of transformation much would be given back all at once. But nevertheless, we, the hierarchy, intend to be patient and we also exhort our compatriots to be patient, not to demand everything at once, to avoid the attitude of hostility and rash actions. However, we must not forget that the believing population will be able to remain patient only when they see concrete steps. P.S. Already last year the bishops in their pastoral letter on the day of the jubilee celebration of the baptism of Lithuania declared (see Catholic Calendar - Information 1988, p. 79): „Fraternally we thank all those who feel for the Church, all those who, because of internal and external obstacles, think they cannot receive all the sacraments, but who cherish the values of the Gospel, represent the Christian spirit by their way of life, their word and their cultural creativity; all those who, in their environment, support and protect the aspirations of the individual faithful and of the whole Church.“ To these words we add our express gratitude to all the cultural creators of our people who, guided by a sense of justice, are raising their voices ever more strongly for Christian moral and cultural values „against their contempt and against discrimination against believers.“ Off: Kaunas aidas (Echo of Kaunas), April 22, 1988

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Interview with the Chairman of the Liturgical Commission of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, Priest Vaclovas Aliulis MIC. Question: What about the religiosity of Lithuanians, how can you characterize it? Answer: I would rather speak of Lithuanian Catholics, without necessarily singling out Lithuanians, because we believe that about ten percent of Catholics (in Lithuania) are Poles or people who pray in Polish, although they speak White Ruthenian in everyday life. There is a difference between these two populations. I would like to say that Polish piety is more traditional, which is expressed, for example, in the fact that a member of the Polish-speaking group attends Mass every Sunday, but goes to confession and communion only once a year. If, on the other hand, a Lithuanian attends church every Sunday, he goes to confession three or four times a year. I think that the Lithuanians' religiousness is more conscious. But the percentage of those who go to church is higher in the Polish group than in the Lithuanian group? Question: Is it possible to observe differences between rural and urban religiosity in Lithuania, which were so characteristic for Poland, especially in the period of a few decades ago: on the one hand, the traditionally devout village, on the other hand, the gradually secularizing city dwellers? Answer: For a long time the village, which is currently losing a lot of people and is aging, was the stronghold of religiosity. The old generation preserves the faith, the young generation is very overloaded with work in the fields from early morning until dusk. And so, they meet the religious obligations with difficulty and have no time for the religious education of the children. Moreover, the school director
or the school inspector, if he is particularly zealous - and this more because of his career than because of his conviction - inconveniences the children or makes a personal effort to convince them (of atheism). But can a child go up against a teacher in defense of his faith? Although this also happens. I will give a drastic example. In southern Lithuania, after Easter, a class teacher asked the students who had been to church. Almost all of them. So she asks one boy, „And what do you believe in?“ He stands up and says the Creed, then asks. „And you, what do you believe in?“ And she failed to answer him. Sporadically such cases also occur, such cases of a beautiful attitude. The emphasis is now shifting to the cities, where there are not too large, but very conscious strata that are very strongly connected with the Church and help it. In Vilnius (Wilna), for example, any arrival can easily see how many young people are at the altar. Question: How many children are baptized? What is their further religious education? Do many of them go to First Holy Communion? Answer: It is difficult to say how many children are baptized, because we do not keep statistics, nor have we ever tried to keep any. Personally, I suspect that at least two-thirds of the children are baptized. More than half of them go on to First Communion afterwards. The preparation for First Communion is very weak. Officially, only the parents are allowed to teach their children the truths of faith. But there is more going on, sometimes a priest helps with the instruction, sometimes a pious person or else someone who can be considered a religious, although officially orders do not exist. These are persons who take vows and live a life according to the order. Such a catechesis before First Communion is held for three weeks during the summer vacation. But often it is of shorter duration, because the children are urged to go to the (summer) Lagem and to the summer retreat. A serious problem is the fact that not too many families have sufficient religious awareness. Of course, they like to lead their children to a beautiful feast at the First Communion and go to the Lord's Table themselves, but already a week later very few children are in church. It is good if the children come to church a second time at the beginning of the school year and at Christmas, but hardly anyone comes to Easter confession a year later. It is painful that many children from practicing families become religiously indifferent by the age of 15 to 16. Some of them succumb to the constant cramming in school that religion is only backwardness, that it is incompatible with science, etc. They simply become indifferent. They simply become indifferent because they do not know how it really is. The religious consciousness is very weakly developed, because from where should they complete their knowledge. So, at the age of 20, only a few young people remain who practice openly. Those who remain are excellent, they are determined not to separate their lives from the Church. They participate in the processions, they serve at the Holy Mass, both boys and girls. Question: And how many people get married in church? Answer: Church weddings are very numerous, because today people are already less afraid than before. Although about ten years ago, six assistants were removed from the Faculty of Medicine who had married in church. Similar cases occur today as well. Unfortunately, young people are little prepared for marriage. In the countryside, hardly anyone is able to conduct pastoral care for the bride and groom, because hardly any marriages take place there at all. In the cities, classes are held, and young people come gem. But some pastors look through their fingers, so young people go where there are fewer requirements, which, of course, harms themselves. When they get married, some go to First Communion because they didn't before. Sometimes they do it honestly in faith, sometimes just for the sake of form, because that's the way it should be. There will be little joy in them, because they will not practice. But those who convert themselves, without any connection with marriage, are very faithful and zealous, just as converts are. There are young converts between the ages of 20 and 30. There are relatively more of them among the young artists who are less dependent and who feel the need for spirituality. Question: What is the situation with church funerals? In Poland, even
some non-practitioners, and sometimes even non-believers, are buried in church because
their family wants it that way. In Lithuania, is burial also a manifestation of religiosity?
Answer: No, we have a problem with the funerals, because not all Catholics - even if they
are very well practicing Catholics - have a church funeral. The reason is the cowardice of
the family of the deceased, who is afraid that if a funeral is held with a priest, then no one
from the company will come and one will not receive any support from the company. So
they only order a funeral service for a few people early on, and after that there is only the
secular funeral. And so the poor people help to create the illusions that Lithuania is no
longer Catholic. But there are also conscious families. Sometimes pressure is applied. For
example, when a teacher from the area of Vilnius had her young son buried in church, the
People's Education Ministry sent out a circular throughout Lithuania castigating her,
saying that „this is no way for a progressive Soviet teacher to act“ ... In the past it was
difficult to give the sacraments to the sick in the hospitals, now the difficulty no longer
exists. In every hospital it is possible to visit the sick person at his request or at the
request of his family. Question: How is the pastoral work in Lithuania? Is the chaplaincy so
popular in Poland developing here as well? Answer: There is no chaplaincy. It is forbidden
to organize services for believers according to their age or gender. And so special services
for young people, for women or students are forbidden. Only community services are
allowed, but in them we can address especially the young people. Question: Is the number
of churches sufficient to carry out the pastoral activity? Answer: For a small country we
have a large number of places of worship, but in Vilnius and other cities where new
neighborhoods have been built, there is a need for new churches. Unfortunately, when the
state authorities were approached with a request for a building permit, the
Plenipotentiary of the Council for Religious Affairs, Anilonis, replied in the magazine
„Literature and Art“: „How can we agree to the building of churches in new settlements
when there is no cinema and no house of culture there yet. That means the faithful would
be privileged, because they would have churches in place.“ It sounds like the government
should build us churches. But all we need is a piece of paper, according to which it is
allowed to build. Well, we hope that this will also change. Question: From what sources is
the church in Lithuania financed? Answer: As far as the upkeep of the church is concerned,
the believers help us very gladly and very generously. At one time, the basis for the
maintenance of the clergy was the agriculture attached to the parishes, but they have
freed us from this. And we are grateful to them and to the Lord God for it. The priests now
have their hands free and can deal exclusively with matters of the Church. The people do
not abandon them, so the priest can be reassured about his livelihood, even if it is a wine
parish, and in the city he is also doing quite well. The houses of worship are restored and
well cared for, because the priest, deprived of the possibility to teach religious education
and to work in Catholic organizations, shows all his energy by taking care of the
equipment and the appearance of the church. Some are not too happy about this, because
what is the point of having beautiful but empty churches. Some, especially younger
priests, seek personal contacts and begin to visit parishioners at home. In 1961, this was
forbidden under the pretext that it was not allowed to collect donations in the homes.
However, since the priest only visits the family without taking money, there is no basis for
prohibiting this. In the big city it is impossible, because one does not know who lives
where and who wishes to do so. But already in the district town it is possible. This greatly
enlivens the contacts of the pastor and the faithful. Question: What is the situation of
religious literature in Lithuania, how much interest is there in Catholic books? Answer: In
our country it is like in the 16th century, there is only the liturgical book, the catechism
and the Holy Scripture. Recently, a calendar was added. Because already in the 17th century there was a lot of edifying and scientific literature. When we will get out of this 16th century state, I don't know. As for a periodical Catholic magazine, there is not unanimity even among the clergy in this regard. The faithful intelligentsia would like it very much. A part of the priests, let us say the more militant one, fears that this magazine will have to be published in such a form that will not be acceptable to us, that pressure will be exerted to assimilate this magazine to the „Magazine of the Moscow Patriarchate“ (of the Russian Orthodox Church), whose style does not suit us. I myself do not share this fear, because the calendar we publish shows that it is possible to print serious religious articles and that the censorship is not so cruel. They ask that something be left out or worded differently, but we can live with that. We have to make an effort ourselves so that the magazine has a good level. And I am an optimist. Question: What kind of religious literature is well received by the readers? Answer: Well known in the homeland is the popular (Lithuanian) writer Antanas Maceina, whose all works from the border area of religion and philosophy already reached us from America and were distributed in typewritten copies. A great number of foreign books are translated into Lithuanian and duplicated by typewriter. Hundreds of items have been translated, although sometimes linguistically not too correctly. A special field is represented by the devotional literature: little books with prayers, revelations, pictures and the like. Especially pious women are susceptible to them, sometimes also priests. It is spread quite widely, but it is probably a pity for such a superficial piety, because one can deal with more serious literature. But the need is probably so. Question: Does the church in Lithuania use religious literature from abroad? Answer: Most of the literature from abroad comes from Poland. We share it with Polish Catholics (in Lithuania), with the intelligentsia and with priests. A considerable number of young Lithuanian priests learned Polish in order to be able to use Polish religious literature. Because it is much more difficult to get literature in other languages. In German, a little literature comes from the GDR as well as from Austria, perhaps because that is a neutral state. The young generation of priests mostly had English in high school, but unfortunately very little English literature comes. Maybe even our Lithuanian brothers in England and in the United States are not oriented about how much we need English literature. We can also get it through Vienna. Sometimes literature comes over that is printed in Lithuanian in the United States. Question: Only a part of the Catholic inhabitants of the USSR live in Lithuania. There are Catholics also in White Ruthenia, in Ukraine, in Latvia, and even in Kazakhstan and in Siberia. Does the Church of Lithuania maintain contacts with Catholics in other (Soviet) republics? Answer: With Latvia, unfortunately, we do not maintain such close contacts as I think they should be. Somehow we always have a „somewhat cool“ brotherhood with the Latvians. There is nothing against each other, but somehow there is no warm closeness. Each nation considers itself the more proud. Once Latvia considered itself more civilized and richer... Today there is a little friendship between the people of the border area and the writers. In the ecclesiastical sphere there is a little cooperation between the liturgical commissions, in the seminaries it is very weak. As for the bishops, they tend to go only to each other's funerals. There is no possibility for the contacts of other (Soviet) republics with Lithuania.... Priests from Lithuania are not accepted to work in other republics. They also warn the theology students from (Latvian) Riga not to go to Lithuania and make contacts with Lithuanians. Nevertheless, the theology students know each other a little, although there has been no official meeting of the theology students so far. With White Ruthenia the Polish priests from Vilnius area maintain contacts, because they support each other spiritually and patriotically. In the (Ma-rien Shrine) Spitzer Tor in Vilnius there is always a concelebration in Polish with priests from White Ruthenia during the main celebrations in November. Vilnius is also the material support for the Church in White Ruthenia, because
here the priests are supplied with paraments, books and liturgical vestments. In White Ruthenia there is also a significant part of the Vilnius Archdiocese, but the (episcopal) administrators from Vilnius are not allowed to administer the Church on the territory of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. But the priests and faithful like to come here for confession and Holy Communion, quite often also for First Communion and marriage.... There is little contact with Ukraine, although believers from there also come to the (Marian Shrine in the) Lace Gate in Vilnius. Ukraine is now the cradle of spiritual vocations for all churches, Latin, Uniate and Orthodox - from among the former Uniates. In Ukraine, young clergymen who already use the Ukrainian language in catechesis and sermons predominate. They are also looking for some forms of religious life there, although without monasteries... Contacts are maintained with Estonia, on a somewhat different basis, because Estonia is almost entirely Lutheran. Before the war, there were 14 percent Orthodox Estonians who had adopted this faith in the 19th century for material reasons. Today, Orthodoxy in Estonia is not popular, and there is a lack of priests of Estonian origin here. Official contacts are maintained between our Liturgical Commission and the Estonian Lutheran Commission. We maintain contacts mainly in the matter of translations of the Holy Scriptures. Young Catholics from Estonia often come to Latvia - converts - who want to draw more from the Catholic spirit. They say that in Lithuania everything religious is Catholic, and this has great significance for them. Question: The Lithuanian Church has few contacts abroad. The bishops have been going to Rome more frequently recently. How are the contacts of the Church in Lithuania with other Churches in Central Europe? Answer: Many priests from Poland travel to Vilnius, and Polish priests from the Vilnius region travel to Poland. In this way they support the Polish and the Catholic spirit. The priests from Poland all go to the Polish-speaking Holy Spirit Church. They are very interested in supporting the Polish spirit. This strengthens Polish patriotism among the religious sisters who are under their influence. This happens, for example, with the Congregation of the Eucharistic Sisters, which Archbishop Matulewicz (Matulaitis) founded with the idea of promoting the apostolate among the White Ruthenians. Since these priests, who consolidate Polishness, at the same time consolidate the Church, they may come. It would be nice if they could do it truly in the Catholic spirit, according to which not only the Pole is a Catholic, but also the Lithuanian and the White Ruthenian can be a Catholic. Contacts with Catholics in other countries are very poorly developed. Perhaps the best contacts are with the GDR, from where delegations of bishops came twice, headed by Cardinal Bengsch and the later Cardinal Meisner. Professors of the seminary in Kaunas went to the GDR several times to visit the theological studies in Erfurt. The rector of the seminary also maintained contacts with priests from Germany, as he participated in the Berlin Conference. From Hungary Cardinal Lekai was with us, our bishops were in Hungary 28 years ago. This year, unexpectedly, Cardinal Sin from the Philippines came to Vilnius. The date of the visit was changed several times, so that some priests learned about the Cardinal's stay only from the press. Trips for foreign studies are very rare. More than 20 years ago, two priests each were able to go to Rome for studies twice. The present Bishop Michalevicius has had one year of additional study in Latin with the Salesians in Rome. More priests have not gone. At present, certain attempts are being made for priests to travel and study in fem studies at the (Warsaw) Catholic Theological Academy. One of the priests wants to study church history at the Catholic University of Lublin, but it is not known what will come of it.... Question: Lithuanians experienced last year as a great 600th anniversary of the baptism of Lithuania. Poles also closely followed the celebration of this anniversary. In your opinion, what influence did this anniversary
have on the religious life of Lithuanians? Among the Poles, the reproach was often raised
that the Lithuanian bishops in the letter on the occasion of the jubilee did not mention
Poland even once, a country that was so important for the work of Christianization.
Answer: The Jubilee was intensively experienced by the faithful. A three-year preparation
preceded it: The first year was about history, the second year was about catechesis, the
third year was the Year of the Living Christian Spirit. The plan was best executed in the
first year. The Jubilee Commission prepared 40 topics for sermons from the field of history
of Christianity in Lithuania. There was also a letter from the bishops on this topic. In this
letter, both Jadwiga and Jagiello were mentioned, as well as the Poles. Also in the
sermons. This explains why in the last pastoral letter there was no mention of this... In the
letter there were, among other things, words of gratitude of our Church for cultural
workers who sympathize with us. At present, in the time of „glasnost“, people of culture
speak very favorably about the Church, about its good influence on the morality of the
people, and they also condemn the sinister consequences of the forced atheization...
Question: What do you think about the consequences of the Jubilee celebrations for the
future of Christianity in Lithuania? Answer: I think that the people have become more
aware that they are a Christian people. For the future, the canonization of Archbishop
Jerzy (note: meaning Archbishop Jurgis Matulaitis) will probably have greater significance.
Because this is permanent. We have a new saint, we have his tomb and the relics....
Among the celebrations of the past year, the most sublime and beautiful were the
beatification feasts in Marijampole. Tens of thousands of pilgrims, more than a thousand
people in folk costumes, in altar boys' clothes and in white during the processions. All
along the route of the procession, from the rectory to the church, the crowd was seen on
both sides of the road and in the cemetery by the church. People walked with their heads
up, with enthusiasm, in the faith of their ancestors. We have our own saint, the Holy
Father knows us and loves us. I think that the veneration of Blessed Jerzy (Jurgis) will
contribute even more to the development of religious life.... Question: I have left the most
delicate question for the end. In Poland there is always an accusation that Poles living in
Lithuania are being litu-anized. Some people accuse the Lithuanian Church of contributing
to the denationalization of Poles (living there). How are the relations between Polish and
Lithuanian Catholics? Answer: Well, finally we are at our common questions. In these
questions I see through rose-colored glasses. We know about the old frictions, at present
there is less of them. There is less hostility (between Poles and Lithuanians) than half a
century ago. Life has taught this quite simply. If the neighborly relations are correct, then
people slowly get used to the fact that Lithuanian is a human being, and that Polish is
a human being. Popular is the joking saying, „He is a Pole, but a good person.“ I belong to
a generation that was brought up very anti-Polish. I got my education with the Marianas
Fathers, they didn't inculcate that in us at all, but in the whole population there was that
attitude. When I came to Vilnius (translator's note: Vilnius belonged to Poland before
World War II and still has a large Polish minority), it was terrible at first. A Pole comes into
the confessional, and I don't know how to proceed, what to start. That was something
terrible. Later, and quickly, one got used to it. I got to know very honest, simple, really
good (Polish) Catholics. Is it their fault that their forefathers abandoned the Lithuanian
language and adopted Polish culture? ... Such a Pole, who is proud of his Lithuanian
descent, we respect very much. But most Poles (living here) resist tooth and nail - don't
have Lithuanian ancestry, don't have that, don't have that... What to do with a person who
has such an attitude? In my opinion, the relations within the Church are quite good. If
especially our Polish brothers in the Vilnius area complain, then they sin. For there are
services in Polish in all parishes where there is a larger or smaller group of Poles or Polish
speakers, as is quite often the case in the village, where people speak White Ruthenian in
everyday life and Polish in church. In Vilnius itself there are two purely Lithuanian
churches, one purely Polish church (Holy Spirit Church), a magnificent place of worship right in the center of the city, which we can only envy. In the other churches the time of services is divided to the minute between Polish and Lithuanian services. In the years 1945-1946 and 1956-1957 a great number of Polish clergy left for Poland, more than believers themselves, because Archbishop Jalbr-zykowski wanted the young priests to leave and survive in Poland, while the old ones stayed put. At that time many churches would have had to be closed if it had not been for the Lithuanian clergy. Bishop Paltarokas repeated several times that theology students should learn the Polish language for the Polish faithful. In about 60 to 70 churches in the Vilnius area, services are held in Polish, in 36 of them exclusively in Polish: sometimes the Gospel is read in Lithuanian. About 50 Lithuanian priests have learned Polish in order to provide pastoral care to Poles. Perhaps they do not convey a faith colored by Polishness, but they convey it to both Poles and Lithuanians. So that is why the Poles should not speak of Lituanization. The Paris (Polish exile) magazine „Kultura“ once wrote in an article... that when I was in a Polish parish, I wrote down the names of the children in Lithuanian version. This accusation is made up out of thin air. Incidentally, the same editorial board reproduces names of Lithuanians in Polish version, which offends us Lithuanians. The Polish exile magazine „Kultura“ also accused the chaplain of the (Marian Shrine of the) Pointed Gate, priest Kazimieras Meilus, of an anti-Polish attitude. Yet he preaches in Polish and gives religious instruction in Polish.... Sadly, there are no Polish kindergartens, there are only Lithuanian and Russian ones. The latter automatically directs children to the Russian school. Few (Polish) people send their children to Lithuanian schools, although then the children better keep their Polishness, because the difference (between Lithuanian and Polish) is strong. In the Russian school, the children in the areligious milieu lose their faith the fastest. Canon Leopold Chomski failed to persuade his parishioners to apply for a Polish school. This is for me a great tragedy. Even worse is the situation of the White Ruthenians. Priest Carniauski alone is a White Ruthenian patriot, perhaps he is too fanatical, which probably makes him more detrimental to the cause of the White Ruthenians. Priest Carniauski translated the Missal, the Lectionary and the readings from the Holy Scriptures into White Ruthenian. They were approved by the Holy See, but they cannot be printed because the (Soviet) authorities claim that it is not worth it because at most ten priests will celebrate Mass in White Ruthenian. All priests in White Ruthenia are very Polish. I support the principle that if you do not let their language into the Church, you leave a whole nation at the gates of the Church. There is currently a religious and national revival among the White Ruthenians, especially among the young people; if Catholicism (in White Ruthenia) will have only a Polish face, they will give it the cold shoulder. Question: And how do you assess the relations between the two nations in the light of the events of your stay in Poland? How do Lithuanians see the Catholic Church in Poland? Answer: I see the Church in Poland. I am pleased by three things: the catechesis, the (Catholic) press and the new places of worship. I am happy when I see what a large part of the youth is attached to the Church. I see that the religiousness of the Poles is more patriotic than that of the Lithuanians. In our country, the Fatherland is rarely mentioned in prayers and formulas, and Our Lady does not wear the coat of arms on her chest. I am a little sad that (in Poland) the understanding of Lithuanian things is quite small and influenced by feelings. People talk (here in Poland) about common heritage, about the past, about the union (between Poland and Lithuania), about common destiny. But we prefer to talk about good neighborliness. For us the Union (between Poland and Lithuania) was a historical necessity, but it turned out to be pernicious (for Lithuanians) from the national point of
view, therefore we do not praise it. Christianity did not necessarily have to come to us (Lithuanians) hand in hand with a political union (with Poland). We paid a high price for this union, one third of Lithuanians became Polonized, to which the Polish clergy contributed in a significant way. If you expect from us gratitude for baptism, I say that Poland got its baptism „for free“, but we paid for our baptism with population and with territory. Some people see the strength of the Church in Lithuania in close connection with the Church in Poland. We are very clear about the importance of the Polish Church. We are glad that the Church in Poland has so much strength, that it has wise cardinals and the beloved Holy Father. Popular in Lithuania are the Polish martyrs, St. Maximilian (Kolbe) and Priest Jerzy (Po-pieluszko - translator's note). We are very grateful to the Church in Poland, but we ask to remember that the strength of the Lithuanian Church has also its own sources. That is why we prefer to speak of good neighborliness, but not of union (with Poland). After all, can three million unite with 37 million today? We, however, are becoming less and less. In the Vilnius region some Lithuanian language islands have become polonized..., and in White Ruthenia such islands have become polonized and White Ruthenianized.... We continue to become less... Taken from the Warsaw Catholic weekly „Lad“ of July 31, 1983. The interview with priest Vaclovas Aliulis was conducted by Andrzej Chodkiewicz. Translated from Polish by Wolfgang Grycz. Taken from „Information and Reports - Digest of the East“ published by Albertus Magnus Kolleg/Haus der Begegnung Königs tein e.V., No. 12/1988 p. 1. ====== Latvia ====== For centuries, what is now Latvia (or Livonia) had been considered a bastion of Lutheranism. When an independent republic emerged in 1918, only a quarter of the population was Catholic, and that was in the eastern part of the country in Latgalia (Latgallen), which was Polish until the partition of Poland. Since then, however, Catholicism has become the dominant denomination in Latvia, largely unnoticed. Today, there are about 400,000 Catholics compared to only 300,000 Lutherans (although the number of practitioners is probably much lower for both). In Latvia and in exile, Protestants and Catholics celebrated the 800th anniversary of the beginning of Christianization in 1986. In 1186 Archbishop Hartwig II of Bremen consecrated the Augustinian canon Meinhard from Segeberg in Holstein as bishop of the Livonians. In 1184 Meinhard had already built a church in Üxküll on the right bank of the Düna. After his episcopal consecration he was given ten more years of activity before he died on August 14, 1196. His feast is celebrated on the day of his death, i.e. one day before the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Mother of God into Heaven. During the Reformation, most of what is now Latvia separated from the Catholic Church. However, Latvia has remained a Marian country. The image of Our Lady of Sorrows in Riga has been preserved. The Marian poems and songs of Latvian evangelical poets are numerous. This is even more true of the part of Latvia that remained Catholic under Polish rule and only came to Russia in the course of the partitions of Poland: Latgalia or InQantia, as it was called in Poland. Jesuit missionaries were active here in the 16th and 17th centuries, and pilgrimage sites such as Skaistkalne (Schoenberg) or Izvolta, whose church and image were destroyed by the Bolsheviks in 1941, were established. The confessional division gave the Latgali ans their own consciousness compared to the Latvians, and some even see Latgalian as their own language. In Latvia proper, the Archbishopric of Riga had ceased to exist in 1561 with the end of the Order State. With the beginning of Polish rule, Jesuits came to Riga in 1582 and established a college, where Peter Skarga also worked. When the Swedish King Gustav Adolf conquered Riga in 1621, the Catholic Church was again suppressed. It was not until the Russian rule of Peter the Great that a small wooden Catholic church was built again in 1722, and the first brick parish church (Mater Dolorosa) was built in 1784. The Jesuits took it over in 1806 and after their expulsion in 1820 the Dominicans, then in 1868 the secular clergy. At the end of the 19th century a national awakening began among the Latgali ans, after the Russification
policy was more violent in Latgalia than in the Baltic provinces. Administratively, Latgalia belonged to the governorate of Vitebsk. Since the 17th century, there are the first written records in Latgalian, the so-called „Latovica“. Russification after the abolition of serfdom went hand in hand with a total ban on speaking and printing Latgali until 1904, while Latvian was not affected by this ban (but Lithuanian was). The beginnings of Latgali writing and a national movement can be found in St. Petersburg, where Latgali was taught to future chaplains at the local Catholic seminary. The St. Petersburg Latgalian orthography used at that time was valid until the early years of the Latvian state. The seminary professor and deputy of the first Russian Duma, Francis Klemps, published the first newspaper in Latgali „Gaisma“ (The Light) in 1905, which was followed by other short-lived organs. About 60,000 Latgalians lived in Petersburg at the time, and they also formed music clubs and youth associations. Popular literature was mostly in the form of religious edification books. There were already attempts to enter into a written language community with the Latvians, but the people rejected the „Baltic“ writings, so on August 17, 1907, leading Latgalians agreed „to recognize the dialect of Latgal as the written language and to publish the books and magazines for the people in this language.“ Prelate Nicodemus Rancans established the first schools and agricultural support funds. As in Poland, the Catholic Church and the people were inseparable. „The Church had, in a sense, latgalized, and the interests of the Church sometimes coincided with the interests of the people.“ (Mikelis Bukss) Again and again Latgalians went to Riga and asked for help for the Latgalians. Even then there were politicians who wanted autonomy for Latvia and inclusion of Latgalia. One of the leading Latgalians wrote about his visit to Riga in 1910: „We found wealth, we heard many beautiful patriotic words, however, we found neither cordiality nor accommodation“. The indifference of Latvians in the Baltic provinces towards Latgalia was still evident in 1916, when the deputies of the Baltic provinces demanded autonomy only for Latvia. „Why was Latgalia forgotten?“ asked then Br. Trasuns, who in independent Latvia often reminded of this disregard in his parliamentary speeches. Trasuns called Latgalians to a unification congress in Rositten from May 7 to 9, 1917, demanding unification with the rest of Latvia with „full right of self-determination over matters of local self-government, administration, language, school and church.“ A similar congress met in Riga on July 30, 1917, and adopted the decisions of Rositten. However, the Latgalian Provincial Council elected in Rositten was not recognized by the Russian Kerensky government. Only the Soviets made possible the separation of Latgal from the Vitebsk Governorate On November 18, 1918, the Republic of Latvia was established, in which Latgali formed the third star above the national emblem. During the hard time of the Soviet occupation, the Catholic Church stood by Latgalianism. Cardinal Julijans Vajvods, as bishop of Riga, after the Second Vatican Council, allowed Latgalian to be used as the language of the church and liturgy, in addition to Latvian. Immediately after Latvia's declaration of independence, Pope Benedict XV re-established the diocese of Riga on September 22, 1918. The first bishop was Msgr. Eduard Count O'Rourke, a native of Belarus and descendant of a family that had immigrated to Russia from Ireland. He had attended grammar school in Vilnius and Riga and, after studying theology in Innsbruck, was ordained in 1907 for the diocese of Kaunas. In St. Petersburg he worked as a professor and spiritual director at the seminary, and later as a cathedral chaplain. His varied language skills were of great advantage to him. In 1920 O'Rourke resigned from the diocese of Riga to make way for a native Latvian. He later went to Gdansk as bishop. His successor in Riga was Antonius Springoviccs. In 1922 a concordat was signed with Latvia, which was very favorable to the Catholic Church. In 1923 it received St. Jacob's
Church in Riga as its cathedral. In 1924, Rome elevated Riga to an archdiocese. In 1938 Pius XI established a Latvian ecclesiastical province of Riga with the suffragan diocese of Libau (Liepaja). In both dioceses, with 20 deaneries and 150 parishes, there were 180 priests in charge of 250 churches and chapels. The seminary had been moved from Aglona to Riga in 1924, where a Catholic Theological Faculty was also established at the university in 1938. The Jesuits, Capuchins and „Marian“ were represented in the country, and the Holy Cross Sisters and the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus were represented among the female religious communities. Besides the two diocesan bishops, there was an auxiliary bishop in Riga. The Be-kennerbishop Boleslas Sloskans also lived here. On June 16, 1940, the Red Army occupied Latvia, and the first persecution of the Church began. The Faculty of Theology was dissolved, Catholic books were destroyed, 40000 people were deported until 1941. In June 1941 eleven priests were murdered or deported to unknown destinations. When in 1944/45 the Red Army occupied Latvia again, three bishops had to leave the country, only Metropolitan Antonius Springovics remained. He ordained Father Strods auxiliary bishop of Libau in 1947 and Kasimir Dubbinskis auxiliary bishop of Riga Dubbinskis was arrested for the first time in May 1949 and deported to a labor camp in the Komi Republic. Returning to Latvia in 1955, he was again arrested and deported in February 1956. In September 1958, Dubbinskis was released back to Latvia, but he was not allowed to exercise his episcopate in the Riga diocese. In 1959 he was arrested again and deported to Belarus, where he had to work as a woodcutter and a carpenter. In 1964 he was allowed to return to Latvia, but without being allowed to work as a bishop. He was allowed to do so again only in 1989. A total of ten priests were murdered after 1944 and 40 others deported. The number of seminarians was reduced from 60 to 15, and in 1965 a total of only five students were allowed in the seminary. In 1958 there were still 164 priests for the 179 parishes, in 1979 only 136 and in 1988 only 105. After the death of Metropolitan Springovics in 1958, Bishop Strods headed the Church of Latvia. Since 1964 Julijan Vajvods headed the Archdiocese of Riga as Apostolic Administrator. In 1972 he received an auxiliary bishop in Valerian Zondak (+ 1985). In October 1982, Pope John Paul II was able to appoint Msgr. Janis Cakuls, then 56 years old, as auxiliary bishop for both Latvian dioceses, with the right of succession to Bishop Vajvods, whom the Pope named the first Latvian cardinal in 1983. In 1988, Riga received another auxiliary bishop, Vilem Nuks. The number of seminarians in Riga has increased greatly in recent years. Non-blesters have also been admitted: Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Germans and others. In the academic year 1988/89, 30 seminarians were admitted, among them 14 Poles, five Ukrainians, four Latvians, three Germans, two Belarusians, and one Russian and one Hungarian. Since 1988, for the first time, foreigners have been allowed to come in groups to Aglona, the most famous place of pilgrimage in eastern Latvia. The Dominican monastery, founded in 1699, houses in its church, built in 1780, an image of grace that is a replica of Our Lady of Trakai in Lithuania. Before the Second World War, when Latvia, like Lithuania and Estonia, were still independent states, up to 200000 pilgrims visited this place of grace every year. After the occupation by the Russians in 1940/41, the monastery, including the valuable monastery library, was completely destroyed. However, the miraculous image has been preserved to this day and, despite the Bolshevik occupation, continued to be venerated and visited by numerous pilgrims. From news of the last years it was known that in Aglona the number of pilgrims increased from year to year. The elevation of Bishop Julijan Vajvods as the first Latvian cardinal had filled the 400000 Catholics of Latvia with new hope. Especially at Pentecost and the Feast of the Assumption, tens of thousands of faithful came to Aglona year after year. The pilgrims arrived not only from the Latvian SSR, but also from Ukraine and Belarus, often also from Moscow and Leningrad, where there had always been strong Latvian communities. Since Aglona is only a small place with about 6000 inhabitants and the Soviet government did
not allow any overnight accommodations for the pilgrims so far, the pilgrims often had to spend the whole night in the open air or in the church. They brought their food from home. Only for the drinking water supply there was a well at the church. Many were the harassments of the authorities to stop the pilgrimages in Latvia. In 1978, for example, already on August 14, all roads ten kilometers from Aglona were closed by the militia. Nevertheless, 20,000 pilgrims came on foot, across the fields. On the feast day of that year alone, 15,000 communions were distributed. Bishop Vajvods was able to confirm several hundred faithful. This was repeated year after year. Until recently, only the resident priests in Aglona were allowed to hear confessions and say Mass. They were therefore in the confessional and at the altar day and night on feast days. Since there were communist informers everywhere in Aglona, the foreign priests who participated in the pilgrimage could not fulfill their priestly duties. This has all changed since 1986. Even foot pilgrimages were no longer hindered. If today the Roman Catholic Church has become the strongest denomination in Latvia, it is also because Soviet-style state atheism has made greater inroads among Latvian Lutherans than among Catholics. Finally, Orthodox Metropolitan Leonid of Riga and Latvia cited another reason for the nationwide advance of Catholicism; many Latvians, whose ancestors had become Orthodox in the mid-19th century as part of a state-directed conversion movement, are caught in a conflict of identity. Nationally, they are seen by their compatriots as sympathizers of Russianness and Soviet Russification politics, and politically often as supporters of the Sovietization of Latvia. In „nasty conflict, many Orthodox Latvians decide to convert to the Catholic Church, which, with its greater liturgical diversity, is closer to them than the Lutheran Church of their ancestors. Regionally, the Catholic Church in Latvia is emerging into that national role so characteristic of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Addresses: Riga USSR Latvija Ordinariate, 226047 Riga, Pils Jela 2. Seminary: 226003 Riga, Kijevas Jela 16.

Estonia

For the territory of today’s Estonia, Archbishop Eskil of Lund had already consecrated the Cistercian monk Fulko as bishop in 1167. Missionary work also took place from the German and Danish side. Danish King Knud VI undertook a crusade in 1196, and King Waldemar II another in 1221, defeating the Estonians and founding Reval. Bishop Albert of Riga had founded the Order of the Brothers of the Sword in 1202 to secure and expand the Christian colonies. Its members, the Brothers of the Knights of Christ, lived according to the Templar rule. In 1237 the Order joined the Teutonic Order. The first bishoprics were Reval (1221), Dorpat (1224) and Ösel (1226). Cistercians, Dominicans and Birgittines worked as religious. Reval belonged as a diocese to the archbishopric of Lund, while Ösel and Dorpat were subordinated to Riga, which became an archbishopric in 1255. The Reformation found its way into Estonia at an early stage. Already Martin Luther addressed a missive to „the Christians in Riga, Reval and Dorpat“.

In 1525 the orders were expelled, the Birgits held out until the destruction of the monastery near Reval in 1577 by the Russians. The few Catholics belonged to the Archbishopric of Mohilev during the period of Russian rule. Between 1940 and 1944 they received a new church in Reval, St. Peter and Paul, which was built in place of the refectory of the old Cistercian monastery in Russen Street. This refectory served as a place of worship for Catholics before the church was built. There was another parish church in Dorpat. When the state was founded in 1918, there were only 2000 mostly Polish and Lithuanian believers living in Estonia. They were placed under the newly founded diocese of Riga in 1918. The nuncio in Reval, Archbishop Zechini, who was a Jesuit, entrusted the only two Catholic parishes in Dorpat and Reval to his friar Fr.
Heinrich Werling from the Low German Province. In the summer of 1924, Father Josef Karte took over the parish in the capital. Apart from these two Jesuits, there was only one invalid secular priest until 1931. After the Concordat, the Holy See established an Apostolic Administration for Estonia with its seat in Reval. The first administrator was Fr. Karte's successor in Reval, Fr. Gottlieb Profittlich from Koblenz. In addition to the two parishes in the capital and in the university city of Dorpat, there were churches in Narwa and Walk, as well as chapels in other places such as Wesenberg and Arentsburg. Bavarian Capuchins also arrived in the new Apostolic Administration in 1931. By 1934 there were already ten Catholic priests in Estonia, including four Jesuits, who published a Catholic monthly „Kiriku elu“ (Church Life) together with the Capuchins. In 1936 Estonia was detached from the Province Germania Orientalis S.J. and attached to the Viceprovincia Lituanica. In the same year Pope Pius XI appointed Peter Profittlich titular archbishop, who was consecrated bishop on December 27. When in 1939 Estonia was ceded by Hitler to the Soviet Union in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which deprived the small country of its independence, ten Jesuits from seven different religious provinces worked in the country, plus 13 other priests. The German Jesuits returned to Germany, but Archbishop Profittlich remained in Reval and was deported by the Soviets. His fate has not been clarified to this day. Currently, the two parishes in Reval and Dorpat are served by Rein Ónapuo, an Estonian born in 1957 and ordained in 1985. The church in Reval is located at 18 Vene Street, and the parish priest's apartment is at 76-7 Karl Marxi St. Services are held in Polish and Estonian, and sermons are also preached in Russian. Archbishop Profittlich is not forgotten by many older believers. In the course of „glasnost“ and „perestroika“ plans have been expressed to put a plaque on the church in his memory.

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Farewell letter of Archbishop Gottlieb Profittlich SJ from February 8, 1941

Dear brother, my dear brothers and relatives! Since I cannot write individually, I take this opportunity to write you all a detailed letter: First, I thank all those who wrote to me on New Year's Day and Name Day: still special thanks to the soldiers who all wanted to write to me, even if not all letters and cards arrived. Then I would like to write to you all together what fills my heart right now. It will be a farewell letter, a farewell letter perhaps only for months, perhaps only for years, perhaps forever. You must have heard that there will be another resettlement to Germany from the Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. I was strongly advised to participate in this resettlement as a German. There were various reasons which suggested the idea of resettlement to me. I cannot explain these reasons in detail. In any case, I was already close to registering with the resettlement commission. But then various circumstances in my life came together in such a peculiar way that I realized that it was God's will that I stay here. The decisive factor was a telegram from Rome, from which I saw that this decision would also correspond to the wish of the Holy Father. If I make this decision, however, there are several consequences: the first is that after the departure of the Germans and the liquidation of the German legation, which will probably be completed by the beginning of March, I will have to give up all correspondence with Germany. If I wanted to continue to communicate by letter with German citizens, it would be considered very suspicious. I might be seen as a German spy and treated accordingly. Therefore, today's letter must be the last. I cannot write any more until the circumstances have changed. And I would also like to ask you not to write to me for the time being. This could only have unpleasant consequences for me. The second consequence is that I must renounce all the protection that I have enjoyed as a German up to now on the part of the German Legation and the German Reich, that I then become a Soviet citizen and place myself completely under the Soviet state. Since you know that the Soviet state is in principle hostile to religion, you will understand that this decision can have far-reaching consequences. - Up to now, the religious situation is something like this: all church houses, with one exception, have been nationalized. We
have lost about eight houses and two chapels. Three churches have already been nationalized. The others will follow soon. It is just not sure yet whether rent will have to be paid for the use of the churches. If rents have to be paid, they will probably be very high, as high as for my room. For this room I had to pay 160 rubles last month, while a room next to me, which is only two meters smaller, costs only eleven rubles. For the clergy the highest standard of rent is set. - At this rate we would have to pay 2500 rubles for our church, which of course we cannot do. So we would have to try to rent a joint church with Lutherans and Orthodox or to hold services in several places in private houses, which would also be difficult. Otherwise we have enough to live on for the time being. And people are sacrificing so much that we will not have to starve. Unless there is a war, which is to be expected in the future, although it is not yet known when that will be and how everything will turn out then. The only danger that could threaten me is that they would start sending priests away from here or arresting them. So far this has not happened. But it is possible that in the future they will be stricter. There will be no direct danger to my life, unless illness would set in during greater exertion, since you know that my health is not exactly the best and my body is probably no longer so resistant. Direct danger to life could possibly occur in the event of war, So, although the future will not be pleasant, I have decided to stay here. It is fitting that a shepherd should stay with his flock and share its joys and sorrows. And I must say that although the decision took a few weeks of preparation, I did not make it with fear and anxiety, but with great joy. And when it was finally clear that I was to stay, my joy was so great that I prayed a Te Deum with joy and thanksgiving. In general, I felt so much God's work of grace on my soul that I have seldom felt so happy in my life as I did on Thursday evening after the decision. I could have told everyone how good God is toward us when we give ourselves completely to Him, how happy one can become when one is willing to give everything, freedom and life, for Christ. - Therefore, I have never been so grateful to God for the gift of the priesthood as I have been in recent days. Ural that not only because God has been so good to me, but also because I found so much love and gratitude among the people when they heard that I would now stay here. Certainly, externally, much of what I have tried to build up over the past ten years has been destroyed. But from what I was allowed to work on souls, so much has remained. And especially some of the converts I have received into the Church in recent years show a surrendering love and gratitude. So, in spite of everything, I really cannot be grateful enough to God for all that He has allowed me to do here. Now, as for the future, of course I do not know what will come. Heiner can predict the development with certainty. But one thing I know for sure now: it is God's will that I stay here, and I am glad about it and go forward to the future with great confidence. And then everything will be fine. And my life and, if it is to be, my death will be a life and death for Christ. I would like to thank you all once again for all your love, also for the sacrifices of money that you have given for our mission. May God reward you all and bless you all abundantly! I will gladly show my gratitude at the altar, as I also sincerely ask for your prayers. If you want to do something good for me, then let occasionally a holy mass be said for me. Perhaps the pastor of Leimersdorf, whose hometown Birresdorf belongs to the parish of Leimersdorf, can also ask my compatriots for their prayers, so that God will not deny me his grace in the future, so that I will remain faithful to my high, holy profession and my task in all that may come, and that I may lay down my whole life for Christ and his kingdom and, if it is his holy will, also my life. That would probably be the most beautiful conclusion of my life. But if it should be God's will that I live through the difficult time and perhaps later be able to do some work for the rebuilding of the church
The Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union

here, then I will also be grateful for that. As soon as it is possible then, I will give a sign of life from me. So may God keep us all faithful in His holy service and in His holy faith and bless us all. And from afar I send you all the episcopal blessing: The blessing of God Almighty, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you all and remain with you always. Amen. With warm farewell greetings Your Edward =====Weißrußland===== All territories of the Soviet Union except Lithuania belong today to the diocese of Riga. In the Mass the name of the Bishop of Riga is mentioned. Bishop Boleslas Sloskans, who died in exile in Belgium in 1981, had been the last bishop for Belarus. Until today the Church in Belarus is without hierarchy. If one assumes that one fifth of Belarus was Catholic, the number of Catholics would have to be at least 2.2 million, including 350,000 Poles and several tens of thousands of Lithuanians. In 1980, Orthodox Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk stated that there were 103 Catholic churches open in Belarus. According to information from Riga, there are currently 107 parishes served by 56 priests. 18 of them are from Latvia, which means that each priest has to take care of almost 40,000 faithful. The age of most of the priests is very high, many are only so-called „sacerdotes lo-cales“, who acquired theological knowledge through self-study and were then ordained in Lithuania, Latvia or Poland. The Polish diocese of Pinsk (of the pre-war period), now in the Byelorussian SSR, has an Apostolic Administrator in Drohiczyn for the part of the diocese remaining with Poland. Between the two world wars, when Pinsk was Polish, the diocese counted over 400000 Catholics in 137 parishes with 210 secular and 142 religious priests. In the „rest diocese“ Drohiczyn lived 92000 believers in 35 parishes. Other parts of Belarus belonged to the Archdiocese of Vilnius until 1939, the remaining part of which continues to exist in Bialystok as a „Polish“ diocese. =====Ukraine===== While the Ukrainian Catholic Church (of the Byzantine rite) has been banned since the pseudo-Synod of Lviv in 1946 and has not yet been readmitted even under Gorbachev, despite many petitions, the Roman Catholic Church continues to exist in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In addition to numerous parishes in formerly Polish areas, there are also Catholic parishes in Kiev and Odessa. The neo-Gothic church in Kiev is now a concert hall; at Sepetovskaya 6 in the west of the Ukrainian capital is Kiev's only open Catholic church, converted from a residential building. It is pastored by a Latvian priest. In Odessa, Salesian Father Thaddeus Hoppe pastors the congregation at St. Peter's Church (Chulturina 5). The rest of Odessa's churches are destroyed or misused, like the cathedral on Karl Marx Street. Most of the Catholics in Ukraine - they are mostly Poles - are in the area of Vinnica and Chmelnick; the priests usually take care of several parishes, as there are only 49 priests for the 93 parishes. =====Moldova===== The old church in Moldova's capital, Kishinev, has been repurposed. Church services are held in the cemetery chapel. In Raškovo, a church converted from a residential building was demolished by the authorities in 1977. In Raškovo, Belcy and Petropavlovsk services are held regularly by two Latvian priests. Address of the priest in Kishinev: Azovskaya 11/1 =====EuropeanRussia===== Until recently, there were only two parishes in the European part of the RSFSR, in Moscow and Leningrad; for the past few years, another has been established in Saratov on the Volga River. The only open Catholic church in Moscow is located at 12 Malya Lubyanka, right next to the KGB prison of the same name. The priest there is the aged Lithuanian Stanislaus Mazejko. The church is the old French church and dedicated to King Louis the Saint. The church is the old French church and dedicated to King Louis the Saint. Until 1950 a French priest could work here, then priests were sent from Riga. In Leningrad, from former 13 churches, also only the former French church (Kovenskij pereulok 7) remained. Priest Josef Povilonis is also a Lithuanian. =====Behind the Urals = Soviet Asia===== Due to the mass deportations of Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, etc. by Stalin since the 1930s, numerous Catholic parishes have been established in the Asian part of the Soviet Union. In Siberia today there are registered parishes in Novosibirsk, Omsk and Tomsk, some served from Kazakhstan and...
others from Lithuania. Most of the parishes behind the Urals are in the Kazakh SSR, about which we report in more detail in the chapter on the Russian Germans, but also in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Some priests are uniate Ukrainians who celebrate in the Latin rite.

Georgia

In Georgia, Christianity traces its origins to St. Nino of Cappadocia, who brought the teachings of Christ to the country south of the Caucasus in the early 4th century. Together with Armenia, Georgia is one of the oldest Christian countries, since King Mirian converted already around the year 320. Very early there were contacts with Rome. The Georgian Catholicos Kyrion turned to Pope Gregory the Great for advice around the year 590. St. Hilarion the monk (f 875) also stayed in Rome during his ascetic and pilgrim life. Experts assume that the Georgians used the „Liturgy of St. Peter“, i.e. the Roman liturgy in Georgian, in their many monasteries abroad, especially in the Balkan Peninsula. During the Crusades, there was renewed contact with Rome, and in 1329 Pope John XII created a Latin episcopal see in Tbilisi, which existed until 1507. While at that time mainly Dominicans were active, since the 17th century it has been Theati-ners and Capuchins who have been active in Georgia. Among the Capuchins, the fathers from Bohemia and Moravia were particularly numerous. Thus, after 1765, an Aloysius of Prague was prefect of the Georgian mission. For 1770 to 1780 a Father Alexius from Reichenberg is mentioned. It was not until 1801 that Georgia, which had been independent until then, became Russian. The expulsion of the Capuchins in 1845 by the Russian government left the Georgian Catholicos of the Latin rite almost priestless. Since the tsar forbade Catholics to use Georgian in worship, Armenian Catholic priests took over some parishes. Thus, of the 50,000 Georgian Catholics in 1917, 40,000 belonged to the Armenian rite and 10,000 to the Latin rite, but there were hardly any Uniates of the Byzantine rite. A Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Conception founded in Constantinople in 1861 by Fr. Peter Charistcharanti provided most of the Georgian priests. A congregation of sisters of the same name also arose in Turkey. The Georgian church at Feriköy in Constantinople was a popular place of pilgrimage for Christians of various denominations until World War I. After the establishment of the Diocese of Tiraspol with the episcopal see in Saratov on the Volga, Georgia was also part of this diocese. In 1903 Bishop Eduard von Ropp visited Georgia and consecrated a new church in Batum. His successor, Bishop Kehsler, also visited Georgia in 1912. After the revolution of 1917 Georgia became an independent republic. Catholics from all parishes met in Tbilisi at that time and demanded from Rome the introduction of the Byzantine rite. The Holy See sent a White Father, Fr. Delpuch, to Tbilisi in 1919 and the Dominican Raymondo in 1920. In 1923 a separate Apostolic Visitor was appointed, but after the 1924 uprising he had to leave the country, which was now once again ruled by Moscow. At that time there were seven parishes and several branches in Georgia. There were two parish churches in Tbilisi, others in Manglis, in Gori (Stalin's homeland), in Hutais. Aehalziche and Batum. Of these, only the parish church of St. Peter and Paul in Tbilisi remains. Among the faithful are Georgians, Poles, Germans. Armenians and Assyrians, i.e. Aramaic-speaking Catholics of the Khakia rite. The services are held not only in the languages of these peoples, but also in Russian. The Church of the Assumption of Mary in Tbilisi has been confiscated and is almost dilapidated. At present it is to be renovated as a concert hall. Another Catholic priest is active on the Turkish border, but this area is closed to foreigners. Some of the faithful meet in the churches of this border region without a priest. The priest in Tbilisi Jan Snezinki lives near the church in Cubinas-vili Street 9. ======Russian-German-Catholics====== With 1.936 million Soviet citizens professing to be German in the last census on January 17, 1979, this German ethnic group is by far the largest German national minority in what is now Eastern
Europe. Among the more than 100 peoples and nationalities of the USSR, the Germans thus rank 14th. Among the „Christian“ peoples the Germans are even on the 8th place after Russians, Ukrainians, White Russians, Armenians, Georgians, Moldavians! and Lithuanians, thus still before the Latvians, Poles or Estonians. According to the census, the Germans would also outnumber the Jews in the Soviet Union. Almost half of them, namely 900 000 Germans, live today in the SSR Kazakhstan, where they form 6.13% of the total population. The Russian SFSR is home to 791 000 Germans, which is only 0.58% of the population of this largest Union republic, but there are districts („oblasts“) such as the Altai region, where the 125 000 Germans, 4.64% of the population, or the Omsk district, where the 121 000 Germans form 6.17% of the population. In the third place is the SSR Kyrgyzstan (or Kyrgyzstan), with 101 000 Germans (2.88% of the total population), in the fourth place is the SSR Tajikistan, whose 39999 Germans, correspond to 1.02% of the population. In the remaining republics live another 105 000 Germans.

====Zur History of Germans in Russia==== The history of the settlement of these Germans on today's Soviet soil can be treated here only briefly. It ranges from the missionary work and colonization of the Teutonic Order among Pruzes, Estonians, Latvians, Livonians and Kurs, through German merchants and craftsmen of the late Middle Ages and early modern times, to the development of the steppe in southern Russia and the Volga region by German peasants in the 18th century. Under Tsarina Catherine, 104 villages were established on both banks of the lower Volga River near Saratov alone, which formed the core of the later Autonomous Volga German Republic. The tsarina, herself a native of Germany, had assured all immigrants in a manifesto of 1763: „All those who have come to settle in our empire have unhindered freedom to practice their religion according to their statutes and customs, and those who wish to settle not in cities but in special colonies and patches on empty lands may build churches and bell towers, keep the necessary number of pastors and other church servants, with the sole exception of the building of monasteries.“ This was followed by the settlement of Mennonite colonies in „New Russia,“ village foundations in Bessarabia, and also in the Crimea and Caucasus regions. A large number of children led to the foundation of many daughter colonies as far as Siberia, where there were 115,000 Germans even before the First World War. The October Revolution and the following years of civil war with the terrible famine weakened Germans in the Soviet Union, the vast majority of whom lived in the countryside. In 1924, the settlements on the Volga were given the status of an „Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Volga Germans,“ in which 422,000 souls lived, about one third of all Volga Germans. The Germans made up two thirds of the total population in this autonomous republic, the rest were Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, etc. The destruction of the free peasantry and the deportation of these „kulaks“ beyond the Urals, the expropriation of property and Stalin's terror measures claimed 140000 lives among the Russian-German population in 1933 alone. The anti-church struggle hit the Catholics and various Protestant churches hard and deprived the Germans of leadership with the liquidation of the clergy. But the death blow for Germanness in European Russia came in 1941.

====Fateful-Year-1941==== Two months after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, on March 28, 1941, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree „on the resettlement of Germans living in the rayons of the Volga region,“ accusing the Germans of having among them „thousands and tens of thousands of diversionists and spies waiting for a sign from Germany to carry out sabotage in the areas settled by the Volga Germans.“ There are eyewitness accounts of the brutality of the resettlement. Bloodbaths and massacres, torture, outdoor camps at 30 to 40 degrees below zero cost the lives of tens of thousands. „Although they were certainly used to severe Russian winters, in winter alone 30000 to 40000 Volga Germans died, especially children, women and old people“. The Volga Germans shared this fate with Chechens, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Ingush and
other deported peoples. Moscow kept silent about these deportations until 1955. It was not until the ukase „On the Amnesty of Soviet Citizens Who Cooperated with the Occupying Power During the Great Patriotic War of 1939-1945“ that the control of the Germans by the secret police was lifted and they were released from the forced labor camps. It was not until 1964 that a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR rescinded part of the 1941 decree and declared that the 1941 „indiscriminate accusations were unfounded and an expression of arbitrariness under the conditions of Stalin's personality cult.“ A complete rehabilitation, however, did not take place, a return to the old areas of residence was not allowed „in view of the fact that the German population in its new place of residence has a firm foothold on the territory of a number of republics, regions and areas of the country, while the areas of its former place of residence are populated.“ This situation has not changed until today. The spatial distribution of Soviet Germans in 1979 As already mentioned at the beginning, most Germans today live in Kazakhstan, where they are distributed as follows (in parentheses share of the total population); | Karaganda District | 130863 | (10.41%) | | Zelenograd district | 102654 | (10.68%) | | Kustgnai District | 94584 | (10.3%) | | Pavlodar District | 81487 | (10.10%) | | Koktschetav district | 76438 | (12,41%) | | Dzhambul district 69446 (7.46%) | | Alma Ata district (without the capital) | 60664 | (7,14%) | | Chimkent district | 50742 | (3,24%) | | Semipalatinsk district | 44057 | (5,70%) | | North Kazakhstan District | 37634 | (6.57%) | | Taldy-Kurgan district | 35661 | (5,38%) | | Aktyubinsk District | 30084 | (4.75%) | | Dzheskazgan District | 23729 | (5.28%) | | other regions and capital Alma-Ata | 62164 | (1,63%) | | 1979 census publications provide the following breakdown for the RSFSR: | Altai region | 124745 | (4.64%) | | Krasnodar region | 24237 | (0,51%) | | Krasnoyarsk region | 54518 | (1.70%) | | Omsk district | 120806 | (6,17%) | | Novosibirsk District | 64895 | (2.48%) | | Kemerovo district | 47040 | (1.59%) | | Orenburg District | 43827 | (2.10%) | | Sverdlovsk district | 33588 | (0,75%) | | Volgograd District | 26746 | (1.08%) | | Tyumen District | 22316 | (1.18%) | | Tomsk District | 15027 | (1,73%) | | ASSR of Kabardins and Balkars | 9905 | (1,49%) | | ASSR of Kalmyks | 5509 | (1.87%) | | ASSR of Khakass people | 11130 | (2,23%) | | On the rest of the territory of the RSFSR among 106 million people live another 186473 (0,18%) Germans. =====Germans as an Ethnic Group===== Although the USSR today has 53 political entities named after peoples and nationalities, namely 15 Union Republics, 20 Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, eight National Territories and ten National Districts, the Germans do not enjoy such benefits. Since 1955, they have only regained the right to schooling in their mother tongue, which is guaranteed to all ethnic groups of the Soviet Union in Article 121 of the Constitution. Since 1956 German-language school instruction has again been permitted in the RSFSR, and since 1957 also in schools in the SSRs of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. German-language textbooks could be printed again since 1956, courses for German teachers were established at pedagogical schools, and correspondence courses were also made possible. In addition to German-language radio broadcasts, German-language newspapers were to promote the preservation of the native language. As early as 1957, the weekly newspaper „Neues Leben“ appeared in Moscow, joined by the daily „Freundschaft“ in Zelenograd and the „Rote Fahne“ in the Altai region. In 1980 a German theater was opened. Despite these cultural institutions, however, the German language as the native language of Soviet Germans is in inexorable retreat. In 1959, of 1.62 million Germans in the USSR, 75% still reported German as their mother tongue. By the 1970 census, the number of Germans had risen to 1.846 million, but the percentage of native German speakers had fallen to 66.8%. For 1979, only 57% reported German as their
mother tongue, so despite the increase in absolute numbers, the number of German speakers has declined from census to census. =====ReligiousDevelopment===== In the Papal Yearbook, a separate diocese of Tiraspol still exists for the Russian-German Catholics. The 34 German Catholic colonies (out of a total of 104) established during the settlement between 1764 and 1767 were initially part of the newly established Archdiocese of Mohilev in 1783. Since most of the clergy of this diocese spoke only Polish, at the beginning of the 19th century fathers of the Jesuit order, which had not been abolished in Russia, were appointed, and their effectiveness was long remembered by the people. In 1848, in the wake of the Concordat with Russia, the Diocese of Tiraspol was established, for which the port city of Kherson was initially designated as the episcopal see. However, the bishop's seat became Saratov on the Volga. In his „History of the Diocese of Tiraspol“ the later Bishop Kessler describes the borders of the diocese: „The diocese of Tiraspol encompassed the provinces of Georgia, Bessarabia, Taimen, Bkaterinoslaff, the governorates of Kherson, Saratov, Nikolayevsk, Novou-sensk (southern district of the Samari governorate), Astrakhan, Stavropol and the Don region (Schnurr, Joseph, p. 96). Thus, the border runs in the east: 100 kilometers from the Ural (river), along the northern and western coast of the Caspian Sea, includes the Caucasus; in the south: the border is formed by Persia and Turkey, the Sea of Azov lies on Diozange territory, as well as the northern coast of the Black Sea. Since the separation of Bessarabia (1921), the territory of the diocese extends to the Dniester River, on the left bank of which lies Tiraspol. In the north, the borders of the governorates of Kherson, Ekaterinoslaff, Don region, Saratov and Nikolaevsk district are also those of the diocese.“ The first bishop was the Galician-German Dominican Heianus Kahn, who also opened the diocesan seminary in Saratov. He had been born in 1789 and had become a Dominican at an early age. He had taught in Grodno, then was curate in Dorpat and prior in Riga before becoming the first bishop in Saratov. He was succeeded after an eight-year vacancy by Franz Xaver Zottmann, born in 1826 in Ornbau in Bavaria, who had taught at the seminary in Saratov. The first Russian-German seminarian was ordained at this seminary in 1864. By 1882, 68 German priests had already emerged from it. A small seminary was attached to it. Of the 160 students there in 1902, 136 were German, eleven Polish, seven Lithuanian, two Georgian, two Czech and one Armenian. Bishop Zottmann built the cathedral in Saratov and voluntarily resigned in 1889: „If one is bishop in Russia for 16 years, that is as much as 50 years in Germany. I have built the diocese a cathedral church by collection, 58,000 rubles have been spent by the government for the construction of the Episcopal House, 62,000 rubles for the construction of a seminary, 19 new parishes have been established to my diocesan government and eleven parish churches and many prayer houses have been built, the diocese has been pretty much provided with German-speaking priests, the seminary has been reformed and actually turned into a seminary. - In short, the beginning has been made, my successor may now continue the matter; I myself am old, decrepit, with weak nerves and can no longer occupy myself with anything but the thought of eternity: strong nerves are needed for the government of the diocese of Tiraspol,“ he wrote back home to Eichstätt. He was succeeded by the colonist's son Anton Johannes Zerr (1889-1901), the first Russian-German bishop of the diocese. He founded the diocesan bulletin „Klemens“, which appeared fortnightly. His successor was then the Baltic baron Eduard von der Ropp, who soon became bishop of Vilnius and in 1917 archbishop of Mo-hilev. He had studied theology in St. Petersburg, then in Kaunas and Innsbruck. He was followed as bishop by Josef Aloisiis Kessler. He founded a newspaper „Deutsche Rundschau“ and built 31 churches before the First World War and the October Revolution struck the diocese almost fatally. The last bishop, Alexander Frison, consecrated secretly in 1926, was sentenced to death in a show trial and executed in 1937. =====Memories of a trip to southern Ukraine by Nikolaus Pieger===== Since 1936
there were no more priests in the parishes. The churches were desecrated, most of the steeplest were taken down. The „Association of the Fighting Godless“, which was particularly active under Stalin at that time, published its own „Anti-religious Library for the German Village“ and its own atheist magazines in German. For the workers there was the paper: „The godless at the lathe“, for the villages the „Neuland“. When in 1941 the German troops invaded Russia, the prelate Nikolaus Pieger, who died recently in Fürth, managed to visit the southern Ukraine. He baptized hundreds of children and describes a church life full of deep faith. He writes in his „Memoirs“: With the agreement of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest and with the granting of privileges issued for the duration of the war and the war zones, I visited the following parishes in the period from August 20 to September 10, 1941: First I came to the commune of Strasbourg with 2500 souls. This German village made at first the worst impression imaginable. Various houses in the village had been destroyed by the fighting, and the streets also looked neglected. As I learned later, the community had suffered greatly from the I earthquake of the previous year. The people had no means and no time to repair their houses due to their use of collective labor. Moreover, all the houses had to be pelted with dirt for camouflage against the airmen. When I entered a house opposite the church, I was immediately welcomed with great joy. After the people had heard that I was a Catholic priest, their joy was indescribably great. In a short time the whole village heard about my stay. They asked me to consecrate the church and to conduct the service. The church was generally preserved, but the bells had been removed and the tower taken down. The interior of the church no longer resembled a place of worship. All altars, pictures and the like had disappeared. The authorities had turned it into a dance hall and theater. When the people heard that services were to be held there the next morning, the entire congregation set about cleaning the church late that evening, to clean the church. At eight o'clock the next morning, the people picked me up from my apartment and escorted me to the crowded church, which they had decorated in a makeshift manner and provided with a makeshift altar. At the chancel, where they had placed three barrels of water, the old church father welcomed me into the church as a Catholic priest and asked me to consecrate water to them and give ecclesiastical consecration to their desecrated church. During the ceremonies, to my great surprise, the choir sang the Litany of All Saints in Latin in a completely correct manner. The Te Deum after the ecclesiastical consecration was sung with an enthusiasm I had not experienced before. An address was followed by a Requiem for the murdered or deceased members of the congregation. The Requiem and concluding Salve Regina was sung by the choir, which had last sung at the solemn service in 1932, in three to five voices. After the service, the people were eager to keep me in their community, especially since a few weeks ago the Romanian popes had held a service in their church and had presented their „saint“, Petrache Lupu, to the people there. With tears in their eyes they let me go, after I had left them some rosaries and the promise to come back quite soon or to send a Catholic priest. After the requiem, I baptized about 300 children. I was told that there were still over 100 children to be baptized. That same afternoon I arrived in Baden with 2,300 souls. Although I intended only an informative visit to this parish, the people forced me to consecrate their church and hold Requiem for their deceased, as in Strasbourgh. At 6 o'clock in the afternoon, I held the church consecration and service in the same manner as in Strasbourgh. After the service, although it was already dark, the people asked me to go with them to the cemetery to seal (consecrate) the graves of the deceased who had died without priestly blessing or consecration and to dedicate a new cemetery. The wailing and weeping of the people at
these ceremonies was so moving that I will probably never forget it for the rest of my life. All night long they were with me in the apartment telling about their suffering and misery during the Bolshevik period. A former seminarian from Saratov, who was the religious leader of the community at that time, said that the day of the rededication of the church and the cemetery was the most beautiful day of his life. For years they had been waiting for a priest and already wanted to write to the Holy Father in Rome. Finally, their wish had come true. The next day I came to the parish of Kandel, where I had previously had my coming announced by a rider. When I arrived at the church at about ten o'clock, I was received at the portal by 18 festively dressed girls with bouquets in their hands and a wreath of flowers. The old church father warmly welcomed me in the name of the congregation as a priest of God and asked for the priestly blessing for the whole congregation. Under the roaring sounds of the well-preserved organ and the singing of the Ecce sacerdos magnus I was solemnly led to the altar. The consecration of the baptismal water, the consecration of the church and the requiem as well as the baptism of children took place in the manner described at Strasbourg. After the service I wanted to go on immediately to the next parish, but the people would not let me go. They forced me to go through the village in procession, singing and praying, and to consecrate it. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, I was not able to consecrate and visit every single house. On the same day I came to the parish of Selz with 3000 souls, where unfortunately I could only stay for a few hours and could not hold a solemn service. The people had to be content with a small devotion for their deceased. The same day I wanted to go to the village of Landau, about 40 km away. With bad roads, we got stuck with the car just before a church. As I got out to get help, an old mother with a child in her arms approached me, and before I could say another word, she asked, „Are you a Catholic priest?“ I was in the parish of Poniatovka with 1447 souls. Since the church had been completely smashed by the rulers, I was holding the service in the yard of this peasant woman, consecrating holy water and baptizing children. In one hour almost the whole congregation had gathered for this service and regretted that I had to move on again. On the way to Landau I passed through the small community of Friedenheim with 232 souls. After the consecration of the holy water and a short prayer for the deceased, the parish let me go, after I had given them the promise to come back quite soon or to send a priest. In Landau, the headquarters of the Beresan area, I could only stay for about an hour that day; I promised to hold the next Sunday service in this parish. When I left, people knelt down and asked for the priestly blessing. The next day I was in Karlsruhe with 2550 souls. This parish of Ukraine had the largest church among the German parishes. The place of worship was just as desecrated and abused as in all other places. The participation in the service was not so strong here, nor did this congregation have an organist or a church father. The participation of those present, however, was no less poignant than elsewhere. After the service, a woman came and reported that she had walled up the altar stones and some hosts in her house. When I told the people about this, the whole congregation went to this house, where I then had to take the preserved shrines out of the wall myself and carry them in solemn procession to the church. A rarely moving celebration was this collection of the rescued relics. In Katharinental with 2300 souls I met another old priest, Father Greiner, an 81 year old blind old man. He told me in a lively manner about the fate of the other priests in the Ukraine who had been imprisoned, deported or even martyred because of their German attitude and their priestly profession. With pride he reported that none of them had become apostates, all of them had taken upon themselves the suffering, even death, as martyrs for their Catholic faith and for their Germanness. In the parish of Munich, 42 km away, with 1200 souls, I met the most religious people. There was not a single German in this community who would have become a communist. Not a single marriage was divorced. Before the service I was told that the cemetery cross, the
monstrance and some relics from the altar stone had been saved. In the blacksmith's yard I had to help dig up the cross and the monstrance with the relics and a beautiful chasuble in a stable. The people had hidden it there. Since the foot of the monstrance was missing, I quickly had a wooden foot made and was able to place the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance for adoration after the service. The joy of the people was indescribable. Again and again they said, „Now it will be all right; for we have seen our Lord God again.“ This congregation had kept even more: a chalice, a box of hosts, some relics from the altar stone smashed by the local rulers, the white baptismal vestment and a box of incense. Before I left, the congregation gathered to once again ask for the priestly blessing. With tears in his eyes, the Schulze, who had traveled 4330 km in four years of exile, gave the thanksgiving speech and concluded with the words: „Father, when you once enter eternity, the dear Lord God will receive you with the words: Enter, you faithful servant, into the joys of your Lord; because you have not shied away from the long journey to Ukraine and have also visited the Munich, you shall be richly rewarded.“ At the service in Rastatt with 3000 souls I again held consecration of holy water, dedication of the church and the cemetery. I had to baptize several hundred children on the same day in this parish. When I visited Neu-Rastatt with 700 souls, a farmer came and asked me to also come to Klein-Rastatt with 500 souls in order to baptize the children there. Even though it was a detour of 11 km, I could not refuse this request and I could not refuse this request and baptized 85 children in this parish on the same day. At the announced service in Landau with 2500 souls, the church was filled to capacity, as well as at the afternoon service and the service the next day. The participation of the school youth was especially strong there, and they accompanied me everywhere the whole day. In Speyer, with 3000 souls, Bolshevism had the most party members. Nevertheless, the church was filled to capacity at the service. Infant baptism, Versehgang, funeral filled the whole day there. The last parish I visited was Sulz with 2000 souls. The sympathy of the congregation was just as touching as in the other congregations. Overwhelming was the walk to the cemetery, where shortly before a number of people had been buried, whom the perpetrators of violence had shot. As everywhere else, I could only free myself in this community by promising to visit quite soon or to send a priest. For about four weeks I was active in the German parishes in Russia. After my return to Romania, I immediately sent a personal report to the Holy Father with the request to appoint the former priest of the diocese of Saratov/Tiraspol, Prelate Dr. Martin Glaser, who was then rector of the seminary in Jasy, as head of the Catholic mission in the occupied territory. After only ten days, Prelate Glaser became the Apostolic Visitor of Transnistria. In all haste we planned the development of the pastoral care in the occupied territories and already in October the second trip to Russia could take place, with the destination Odessa. At that time, the newly appointed Apostolic Visitor and my collaborator in Romania, Father Kampe, now Auxiliary Bishop of Limburg, also went along. In turn, we were able to convince a medical orderly, who was also a chaplain, to give us a ride in his truck. At the beginning of November, after a difficult journey, we arrived in Odessa. Our first way led to the cathedral, which was dedicated to St. Clement. Soon a number of people arrived and we were able to discuss the situation with them. The cathedral, which stood at 33 Catherine Street, had been desecrated like all the other churches. At times it was a storage shed, then a horse stable and military depot. The believers of Odessa had already repaired the church to some extent before our coming. Of course, only the most serious damage could be repaired. All the altars had been removed, the large altarpiece depicting the Assumption of Mary had been cut out of the frame and a large Stalin painting had
been put in its place. Some of the marble floor was badly damaged, and some of the windows were without glass. Nevertheless, the first service was soon held by Prelate Glaser. In a short time a large congregation had gathered at the daily services."

==Polish-witness-for-German-Catholics== At the same time, a Polish priest from England was able to visit Polish Catholics in the Soviet Union. It was not until 1988 that a Polish woman who survived the terrible period of deportation was allowed to report on it in the Catholic Warsaw weekly „Lad“. She also mentions Russian Germans: ... In the period of friendly relations between Stalin and the Polish (exile) government (after Hitler's invasion of the USSR), a Polish (Catholic) priest was allowed to come from England to pastor Poles who were in Kazakhstan. The priest, traveling from village to village, located a former organist on the way, he joined the priest, and together they sought out the Poles. Although there was no way to pass on the news because of the lack of proper communication, the news of the priest's arrival spread very quickly. Not only the Poles, but also the members of different religions as well as non-denominational people rushed to him. This coincided with the 25th anniversary of the introduction of Soviet power, with the anniversary of the closing of the churches and the disappearance of the hospitalers. The joyful news of the priest's visit to our district had reached us a few weeks before. It was decided to prepare our children for First Holy Communion. There were several children, but none of us adults remembered the catechism well enough to teach the children. Textbooks for religious education did not exist, and in this situation they entrusted ... my sister and Wandzia Urboś the task of preparing the children for confession. The girls set to work, and when the priest arrived, everything was ready. The priest stayed with us where there was a medical supply point, which was the biggest and neatest house. On the first day there was a confession of all the Poles and the First Communion of the children, and later a solemn Holy Mass. The candles were lit and the sacramental words fell... addressed to Him who sees all and watches over all and without whose will no hair falls from anyone's head. Organist Chojnacki sang the songs. Everyone sang along. With joy and happiness, everyone cried together with the priest. After the celebration, the priest said that it had been worth coming here to see people who were so imbued with deep faith, longing and love for the Lord. longing and love for God. There was no end to the joy and the conversations. Towards evening, when it became necessary to heat water so that the priest could wash himself, there was a lack of wood for heating. None of the Poles wanted to go out to get wood. The priest noticed our confusion and asked if something bad had happened. We told him that usually, to get wood, we went to the collective farm and we would steal a few sticks of wood each, but today we were after Holy Confession and no one wanted to sin. The priest smiled and said, „Then I will go to get wood, only someone from you has to show me the way.“ A lot of fuel was needed, because all the wells were frozen, and it was necessary to thaw the water from the snow. And so our first day with the clergyman passed; with prayer, with conversation and practical things. The news of the arrival of a priest spread in no time. From dawn, the local population had begun to flock here. At first, the older generation came; the youngsters and children peered in through the windows out of ordinary curiosity. The older ones asked for confession and other sacraments. Inspired by the older people, whole families began to come in, and they asked for baptism. Because there was no water to be fetched from the well, we were busy day and night thawing snow to provide the priest with the water necessary for baptism. Before evening, carts from other villages began to drive up, full of people of different ages: they urgently requested the priest's service. The wealthier ones brought as gifts many foodstuffs as well as money, and they wanted to have candles, medallions, rosaries, pictures, icons consecrated, for this they took the opportunity. One German family brought a whole suitcase full of liturgical equipment: there were beautiful embroidered vestments, choir robes, stoles, mass linen, a golden...
chalice, a paten, liturgical books, even an avoidance book and mass wine. How much joy and happiness was reflected in the faces of these people when they returned to the priest what had once belonged to the Church. They had kept these treasures for many years, only to be able to give them into hands worthy of them. When the priest received these gifts, he fell silent with emotion. The faith and sacrifice of these people were not only touching, but downright amazing. The following day there was no more free space in the square. With each passing hour, more people came. They moved forward on their knees, hands folded in prayer or raised to heaven, singing and praying. At the sight of the priest, they asked him to indulge them in the sins they had committed throughout their lives. There was a crying, a weeping, a singing. What took place there can neither be described nor reported. Sleep was out of the question for us. The harvest was great, but the workers were few. And therefore all the adults, after being instructed by the priest, baptized those who arrived. The children, in turn, dragged snow to the kettle, they heated the stove to be able to provide as soon as possible the water necessary for baptism. The priest, however, was at a loss for words. Thousands of people were asking for holy confession. The priest's arms drooped with fatigue. He spoke a few words in Latin, made the sign of the cross and said the blessing. I don't remember much of these events, we were all in some shock. When the management of the collective farm saw what was happening around the priest, they claimed that a revolution was beginning in our country. On the fourth day, a police car drove up in front of the office. The police dispersed the crowd, entered our house and called the priest out. After a short conversation, they took him away in the car and drove away amidst the shouting and lamenting of the people. When they arrested the priest, the police chief said to him, „We allowed you to look after your Poles, but you are carrying out a devil's work, you have very, very corrupted the people, you are inciting them to rebel against the Soviet power. Oh, this is bad. “ They arrested the priest and put him in prison. A few weeks later a message came from him. He asked that warm clothes and food be sent to him. He also reminded that he was working day and night, hearing confessions and administering the sacraments. He said that he was needed just there, he had so much work that the time of his life would not be enough for it. Another time we received a note from the priest, on which he wrote that Providence directs the destinies of people differently. Our banishment to Siberia was necessary so that through us the light of faith would be kindled in the people who were deprived of these gifts. That he had been able to baptize thousands of people and reconcile them with God was a real miracle of divine providence and love. Excerpted from the Warsaw weekly newspaper .Lad“ of August 21, 1988. Original headline: „The arrival of the priest.“ Translated from the Polish by Wolfgang Grycz. Taken from Information and Reports - Digest of the East, published by Albertus Magnus Kolleg/Haus der Begegnung Königstein e.V., No. 10/1988, p. 10.

Deep Faith in Central Asia

Decades later, one encounters this faith in Central Asia as well. There, the Polish priest Władysław Bukowinski, who died in 1975, did heroic work. His memoirs, which he wrote down before his death during a visit home to Poland, are an important source for the history of the Catholic diaspora in Soviet Asia. In it we read, among other things: „In the Asiatic part of the Soviet Union, among the Catholics in first place... are the Germans, in second place the Poles, and in third place the Lithuanians.... The Catholics surpass the Orthodox; they strive to hand down faith and piety to their children and grandchildren. In the struggle for the child’s soul, most depends on the family and especially on the mother. In the multinational Catholic population of the Soviet Union there are very few convinced atheists; there are more agnostics, but fewer than among the Orthodox. Numerous among the younger generation
are those who are believers but do not pray at all or pray very little. Such, however, usually cross themselves in the evening before going to bed and always have their children baptized...“ In order to somewhat stop the emigration requests to Germany in the 1970s, the Soviets even had to allow new church congregations. In Kazakhstan there were cases where Russian Germans gave the ultimatum: either we are allowed to build a church or we apply to leave for Germany. Thus registered parishes were established in Aktjubinsk, Alma-Ata, Dschambul, Issyk, Karaganda, Kustanaj, Pavlodar, Zelinograd (all Kazakhstan), in Prunze (Kyrgyzstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Duschambe (Tajikistan), Irkutzk, Chelyabinsk and Novosibirsk (RSFSR). There are also German Catholics in the parishes of Moscow and Leningrad, Tbilisi (Georgia) and Kishinev (Moldova). Beyond the Urals, only a few priests are active. The last priest of the Tiraspol diocese, Prelate Michael Köhler, died in 1983, and the last German priest ever in the Soviet Union died in 1984. It was the Capuchin priest Thomas Maria Gumppenberg, who was active in Latvia before the war and in the last years of his life was in charge of Aktyubinsk. In the meantime, a German seminarian, Josef Werth, was ordained to the priesthood in Lithuania in 1984, and today he leads the community in Aktyubinsk as the successor of Fr. Thomas. In Riga, Josef Schmidtlein was ordained in 1987, followed by others. Eleven Russian-German seminarians studied in Riga in 1988/89, including two deacons. The other priests for the Germans are Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles and Ukrainians, who often serve up to 25 outstations. Thus it comes about that - as the pastoral office for the Catholic Russian Germans established by the German Bishops' Conference in Königstein under the direction of Peter Macht - „very many of our brothers in faith in the Soviet Union have never seen a Catholic church in their lives, never experienced a solemn church service. Many gather for prayer in the cemetery and in private homes. For their children's First Communion or to receive Confirmation, some travel hundreds, even thousands of kilometers. And a distance of 200 kilometers doesn't stop them from confessing.“ Sister Valentina Dötzel, a prayer leader and helper in the parish who had moved to Germany, reported on church life at one of the „Church in Need“ congresses in Königstein: „In general, the priest celebrated Mass early in the morning. But when he had departed, the morning prayer was read together under the direction of Sister Gertrud. She also distributed Holy Communion, for which she had special permission from the priest. She did this with the help of a special spoon so as not to touch the host with her fingers. This was followed by prayers of thanksgiving. In the evening, everyone gathered again to pray together under her leadership. Prayers were sung or read from the Scriptures.“ These sisters live in communities, although Catholic religious orders are not officially allowed in the Soviet Union. However, they are dubbed monashki (nuns) by local Soviet authorities. Only through these „prayer sisters,“ as they are called by the Russian Germans, not derogatorily but as a term of honor, and through the courage of faith of the laity, can the church survive in the face of the priest shortage. Such brave sisters also came voluntarily to Kazakhstan from the rest of the Soviet Union. Thus, a Polish woman from Georgia reports: „I have been working in Kazakhstan since May 28, 1976. Before that, I - a Catholic - lived in (Soviet) Georgia. There, years ago, a canonized priest, who is no longer alive today, told me a lot about the people living here (in Kazakhstan), to whom he went back and forth. There he heard them tell about the times when they found themselves here, scattered over a vast territory, numbering several thousand kilometers, on which they had to exist for several dozen years under inhuman conditions. The priest of whom I speak here came here from time to time to perform pastoral functions. He had to hear confessions, celebrate Mass and distribute the sacraments for hours without interruption, mainly at night (for fear of arrest), between eight and fourteen hours. There were people confessing who had not received the Sacrament of Penance for ten to 40 years because they had not had the opportunity to meet a Catholic priest. The harvest there was great, but the workers were
few. Under the influence of these stories, I decided to move to this area with the intention of: 1. to create there a center of love where our Lord Jesus could dwell sacramentally and where His presence itself would influence reality; 2. to ensure a base for any priest who would risk taking on any difficulty in the name of God's love and love of neighbor, who is in extreme need, both spiritually and often materially; 3. to work personally with the people here and for their good by all means possible under the circumstances. ==The local situation in Z.== The city of Z. has about 300000 inhabitants. It is widely spread. In terms of transportation, there are only buses. There are few buses, so people often wait forty to sixty minutes at the bus stops. The national composition is differentiated: Russians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Gypsies, Ingush, Jews, etc. The city began to develop in a modern style in the fifties. New settlements were built, composed of the typical blocks of flats. The old houses are - 99 percent - ground-level, small huts, assembled from saman (mud bricks with admixture of dung, straw, etc.), without foundations, with flat, earth-covered roofs, on which grass grows in summer (hence the name of this cottage - „Semlanka“). The windows are quite small, which results from the need to keep warm during the long winter, which lasts here seven to seven and a half months. ==Fight for own church== There are more Poles here than Germans (unlike other cities in Kazakhstan where there are more Germans than Poles). The Poles are Catholics, the Germans are Catholics or Lutherans. The city has a well-preserved Orthodox church with three clergy, a Muslim mosque for the Kazakhs, a Protestant house of worship, and a house of prayer for the Baptists. The Catholics do not yet have a church, although their struggle to have their own place of worship has been going on for 25 years. The Poles are descendants of families who were resettled in this wasteland from the area of the Polish border in 1934/36. At that time, in the face of annihilation, they decided to „return home“. They were reckoned with in such a way that out of all the men only two remained alive. Witnesses of these events are still alive, but details are not necessary here. To this day there are still families in which the mother tongue has been preserved. The children speak Polish, the grandmothers teach them the Lord's Prayer. The middle generation and younger have never been to a real church in the fiefdom, have not seen a single solemn service nor liturgical vestments (the priests who come here from time to time use only choir robe and stole). I have some slides showing the inside of churches in Lithuania and Latvia - you must have seen those beaming faces and tearful eyes when I showed them when I told them about the liturgy and Catholic life. Around the city there are many so-called „posiolki“ - small towns, each with a few thousand inhabitants, about ten to 40 kilometers from Z.. There are also many Polish Catholics there. They are all waiting for their church and a priest. In one of these „posiolki“, in a private house, they established a little church in 1949/50. However, they did not get an official confirmation for the church, the priest was forced to leave, and today he is no longer alive. 20 years ago, the struggle for a permanent „official“ house of prayer began again. Money was collected, a verbal permission was obtained and a house was bought for 12000 rubles. The priest was very zealous. The services were held in three languages: Polish, German and Ukrainian. Catholic life began to develop very dynamically, but it did not last long. No written permission was given, the house was taken away from the Catholics, and the priest had to hide during several months for fear of arrest. One of the organizers was imprisoned for a whole year. This event caused people to become generally despondent and to adopt a pessimistic attitude towards all such attempts in the future. Even after 20 years, when it came to the possibility of obtaining permission to open a church, I heard the expression: „In the end, they will take everything away from us.“ ==Almost always
without a priest==== At present, German Catholics gather on Sundays and feast days to pray together in two places where the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is kept. Usually in a small cabinet, in a small box. The prayer lasts two to four hours. Usually the prayer is led by one of the women - the others answer. Services are held at special periods of time - in May, in June, in the Rosary season, in Lent, finally Mass prayers. The faithful sing in Latin the Asperges, the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Credo, the Sanctus, the Benedictus, the Agnus Dei and songs in the native language adapted to the time. One hears the reading and the Gospel, always a prayer is said in the intention of the Holy Father and the whole Church.

The Polish Catholics did not have a fixed place for common prayer all the time. For each Sunday they agreed with whom they would meet for prayer. If someone could not be present on a Sunday, it was difficult for him to find out where the next meeting would take place, because the city is very spacious, the traffic conditions are fatal and the Catholics are scattered all over the city. External pretext of a meeting, in case of intervention of the authorities, are the so-called „pominki“ - a prayer for the deceased of that family which lives in the given house. Sometimes the gathering actually has this as its goal, in which case the hosts prepare a lunch for those praying, considering this a good deed for the benefit of the deceased. „We have neither church nor priest, we cannot give anything for the church, so we feed good people“. The common prayer - these are prayers of the hour, the chaplet, the Mass prayers. All parts of the Holy Mass are sung in Polish. At present, with verbal permission from the authorities, we have leased a small house where a pious woman lives with her blind old mother. The larger room is about fifteen square meters, the smaller one eight to twelve square meters, and there is also a kitchen and a hallway. The ceiling is low, as usual, and the windows do not open. We pray together - Poles and Germans - very harmoniously, giving way to each other with love, but more often we unite in common prayer. For example, when the Rosary is prayed in German, the Poles do not repeat it - we understand everything. We sing the solid parts of the Mass in Latin - everyone understands. We have a small electric organ. The other Mass prayers are sung alternately in German and Polish. The readings and the Gospel are also read in both languages, and the homily is read from the book. At the beginning of the Mass prayers we sing the Asperges, there is the sprinkling of holy water, later we pray in a general intention, connecting spiritually with those who are actually participating in this Holy Mass at that moment. We repeat this intention at the time of the consecration and also during the spiritual reception of Communion. After a moment of silence, we say, „Body and Blood of the Lord.“ After the Mass prayers, we spiritually perform adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, sing „O Salutaris,“ say a prayer for the Church, ask for a priest, sing the „Tantum ergo“, the „Salvum fac“ ... and finally the „Angel of the Lord“. „The new Pope will give us a priest...“ On all three days of Lent, we hold the Stations of the Cross. At Easter we hold a procession without a priest, carrying a cross with a red ribbon, a picture of the Risen Lord, an Easter candle made by our own hands. The procession takes place in the aforementioned little room. When we learned that a Pole had become Pope, one of the pious women exclaimed, „Now we will also have a church and a priest, the Pope will surely take care of us.“ We received a photograph of the Holy Father, and now he is constantly with us, in our „church“. In our town there has never lived for permanently a priest, there has never been one engaged in pastoral care, there has never been religious education. Religious life in its present form is a miracle of divine grace and providence. O Jesus, good shepherd, stir the hearts and minds of the shepherds who work in Your name, so that they may surround with special love and care those most neglected and abandoned of Your sheep, who call to You from the depths of their need - Jesus, we trust You. After all, it is not for nothing that You have given us as Your Vicar in these times a Holy Father who, out of Your Providence, is so concerned about the affairs of these poor people. According to His thoughts, the Polish people have a special mission.
The situation in K. The city, built after the last war, has about 800000 inhabitants. It is very extensive. The parish priest lives 18 kilometers from the church. The number of Catholics is about 3000, mostly Germans, but also Poles, united Ukrainians, some Lithuanians. The Germans were interned here from the European part of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the war. These people, after being transported here, were simply abandoned in the steppe, they had neither housing nor clothes. The frost reached up to 45 degrees in winter. That is why many perished. Later they built themselves huts from „saman“ and fought against hardship. 30 years of struggle for a place of worship. They prayed together - wherever and whenever there was an opportunity. They gathered especially on Sundays and holidays. The struggle for a church lasted for about 30 years. For the time being, they gathered in houses, although they were dispersed, punished and threatened, all this did not bear fruit. Some unmarried women devoted themselves to the work of maintaining and expanding religious life - they conducted common prayers and gave religious instruction. When people went to pray together, they said, „We are going to church.“ To omit such a prayer they considered a sin. Later there were four, even six priests in the town. It is said that once there were even twelve priests here, who remained in this area after serving their prison sentence. Today there are four priests here. Two of them, who do not have permission from the authorities to perform their priestly function, are Uniate; the other two have been given permission by the authorities to hold services in the church and to minister to the adult faithful. One of them counts 83 years, he is indeed a man of God of great spirit. The younger priest the authorities are constantly trying to remove. The permission for the official opening of the church was received on January 27, 1977. The church consisted of a small „semanka“ (earth hut). A year later, a church (26 meters long, 18 meters wide) was built on the same site. The authorities made the reservation that the height of the church should not exceed four meters. The church can accommodate about 1000 people. Four masses are held daily - two in the morning and as many in the evening. Many people are present at each Mass, including young people and children. Eucharistic life is flourishing. Within four months 39000 Holy Communion were distributed. Communions were distributed. There were many difficulties when it came to getting permission to build the church and to build the church itself. In the beginning, the head of the church committee was called by the religious affairs officer and told that children should not be allowed to visit the church. The priest replied to the message given to him: „If you do not allow children to go to church, I will not stay here. I am not a priest just to bury old people.“ Today the Church is full of children and young people. There are people who are actively involved in catechesis. Since teaching children in the Church is forbidden, they study in small groups at home, after which there is an examination and the celebration of Communion. Last year 300 children went to First Holy Communion. Eucharistic processions are often held. On First Thursdays, prayer is aimed at asking for priestly and religious vocations. When the priest preaches on this subject, there is a general sobbing in the church. The priest takes pains to awaken in each believer an awareness of his responsibility for the life of faith. At Holy Mass, youthful altar boys serve in choir shirts and collars. On major celebrations, up to 32 altar servers gather. The parish has about 80 girls who are part of the processional. Initially, there was a lack of white dresses. Now they all have white dresses, and a new problem has arisen - how to line up 40 pairs of girls in the procession. Another problem concerns the flowers for scattering and decorating the church. Winter is long, it is difficult to get garden flowers, so the pious women grow to fulfill wherever they are. Help us and we will do our best not to disappoint You.
flowers in the houses, and the church has fresh and beautiful flowers even at the times when the frost reaches 30 degrees. These are small things, but they are very eloquent. Before the Easter celebrations, the authorities announced a control of children attending church services. (As is known, children are not allowed to participate in the liturgy until they reach the age of 18). Lists with the names of these children were to be forwarded to the schools so that the appropriate consequences could be drawn there. When the young people and children learned about this, they came to officially declare their participation, because they wanted to suffer for the Lord God. The anniversary of the priest's ordination was solemnly celebrated. The children sang beautiful songs in different languages, the adults thanked the priest for his great sacrificial work for their souls, through which the Lord God provides them with so many graces and joys. To this the priest replied: „What we have now is not my merit. All this is the sacrificial fruit of all the many who can no longer see this with earthly eyes, because they have given their lives in sacrifice ... All know how many have perished in these several dozen years of struggle. Now they rejoice in heaven together with us, and we must realize our responsibility for this happiness, namely, that we have a church and that we can gather without fear to pray together.“ N. N. Kazakhstan, 1980 „Kultura“ 5/80 ======From the memoirs of the Polish priest Vladislav Bukowski, who worked in Kazakhstan and died in 1975====== Off Part 2: To my friends, the laity. „The object of my already long-standing work as a pastor and missionary is not the Russians and much less the Kazakhs or Tadshiks. I work mainly among Germans and Poles. What are they Germans and what are they Poles? The Germans are not from Germany and the Poles are not from pre-war Poland. Germans are far more numerous in Karaganda itself and in general in these areas than Poles. These Germans are descendants of German colonists who were brought to the Russian Tsarist Empire at the time of Catherine the Second and her successors, i.e. in the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Uniform in their faith, the Germans in the Soviet Union - as in Germany itself - are not. There are many who are Protestant, quite a few Baptists, but also many Catholics. Some Germans came to this area before the revolution, but the vast majority of them were resettled here from the European part of the Soviet Union, partly before the war, but especially during the war and immediately after its conclusion. Quite a lot of Germans came to this area also voluntarily in the post-war years. German colonization in the Russian Tsarist Empire took place mainly in two areas: 1. in Southern Ukraine (Odessa, Nikolayev, Kherson, Zaporohye), 2. in the Volga region near Saratov. Our Asian Germans come mainly from these two areas. I work among the Germans not only in Karaganda and the nearest surroundings. I work among them as a chaplain during my Russian expeditions in different areas, but especially in Tadzhikistan, about which I will tell in the third part of this writing. With full conviction I can confirm that it is good to be pastor of the Germans; or as the local atheists call it, >a German Pope<. The Germans have obedience and discipline in their blood. Either they do not invite a priest at all, or, if they do invite him, they almost all benefit from his services. In contrast, our >Polish people< in Kazakhstan, as everywhere, are individualists. If a German Catholic marries a German Catholic in Kazakhstan, then the two mothers usually come to the priest a whole month before the wedding and say: >The wedding will be celebrated on such and such a day. We will come early enough so that Father will have enough time to prepare the young people for the wedding (and, please, speak to their conscience, Father)< and to decide together the date of the wedding, of course, before the wedding ceremony. Our dear „Polish people“, on the other hand, think only about the lavish celebration, which should be accompanied by a lot of vodka, and they start thinking about the church wedding only after the wedding, and not all of them. In short, the Germans are far more consistent as Catholics than the Poles, and therefore it is pleasant to be their chaplain. - The Poles surpass the Germans in some respects. They are more cordial and willing to sacrifice. All
of them, not excluding the young studied people, kiss the priest's hand, and they do it gladly, without compulsion. The Germans, with the exception of some old women, do not know the custom of kissing the priest's hand. They are more stiff, though not without cordiality. Yes, they are also willing to sacrifice, sometimes they really give a lot, but the Poles are generally more willing to sacrifice. For many years I have lived exclusively on the donations of the parishioners, I even travel when I have to, and in addition I pay the income tax, which in 1969 amounted to 1088 rubles, i.e. 16320 złoty. Well, I could not afford a car, but it is enough for the most necessary things. Old Catholic Germans feel first of all as Catholics and only then as Germans. Such an old German Catholic speaks of himself: I am German-Catholic< and more rarely: >I am a German' (both sentences German in the Polish text - d. Übers, j.). Among the young, the desire to be Catholic no longer so much outweighs the desire to be German. Old Catholic Germans do not even consider Protestant Germans or Baptists as their compatriots anymore. They also prefer their children and grandchildren to marry Poles or Lithuanians, if only they are really religious and Catholic. Almost always, however, they are against marriages with the Russians or Russian women. Since the German families are also far more obedient and disciplined than the Polish ones, the children there pay far more attention to the opinion of their parents, and therefore there would be few German-Russian mixed marriages, and even marriages with German girls and men of other denominations occur much less frequently than uniform marriages of German Catholics. The Germans, like the Jews, like to squat together. In the first Sacb-war years they were badly scattered, were under command everywhere, and had to live where they were ordered - often without compatriots, among various other nations. However, when they were freed from the commandant's office and given back their freedom of movement, they did not return to their native region, where there are now quite few Germans, but went to places where larger groups of the German population had already settled after the war. This was also the case in Karaganda. When I was sent to Karaganda 15 years ago, there were relatively few Germans here. Only in one suburb there lived many Germans from the Volga region, who were sent there already in 1930 after their previous >decollectivization< during the collectivization of agriculture. Among them works and lives my neighbor and friend, the prelate Rev. Alexander Chira, former rector of the Greek Catholic seminary in Uzhhorod in Transcarpathia. In the last 15 years the Germans have settled all over Karaganda, probably they came here also because it was easier to find work, but above all they were attracted by the fact that there are many Germans and Catholics in Karaganda, especially that there are Catholic priests in our city. I have never observed anything similar among the Poles. A Jew is attracted to another Jew, a German to a German, but a Pole rarely moves to a place where there are even a little more Poles. The relations between Poles and Germans who are Catholic are good, often even cordial, which cannot be observed even in the relations between Poles and Germans of other denominations. In general, Germans consider themselves to be better than Russians and Poles, but Catholic Germans consider Poles and Lithuanians to be almost their equals. (...) Among both Poles and Germans the young intelligentsia is growing up. They do not know much about Germany and do not know the culture and history of this country. Nevertheless, these young, educated Germans are much more familiar with the problems of their homeland (homeland of the ancestors - editor) than the young Polish intelligentsia. (...) In the European part of the Soviet Union the Lithuanians are numerically in the first place among the Catholics, in the second place the Poles, in the third place the Latvians, rarer are Catholic Belorussians, Armenians, Georgians, Germans. (...) In the Asian part of the USSR
among the Catholics the Germans are in the first place, in the second place the Poles, in the third place the Lithuanians, and all other nationalities are only slightly represented. (…) I will give examples. All of them are taken from the life in the Soviet Union. Only two of them are sad. All the names mentioned, except the last one, have been changed for obvious reasons. (…) An engineer about 30 years old and his wife, both German and Catholic, came from a larger city in Siberia to Karaganda for a few days to have their already two-year-old little daughter baptized. Both made confession and communicated. Let us call this engineer Friedrich and his wife Gertrud. I made friends with this nice, exemplary couple. Friedrich has higher education, Gertrud, on the other hand, is by no means equal to him in it, having finished only five or six grades of an elementary school.

We talked to each other. I asked Friedrich: >Are you satisfied to have taken a wife who is so much less educated than you?< < Then I got the following answer from Friedrich: „Yes, I am even very satisfied that I married Gertrud. I don't need a highly educated wife. I need a wife who is devout and pious. My mother and also her mother are simple, uneducated women and yet they brought us up well as Catholics. I want to have a wife who can raise our children no worse than our mothers did. < Then I asked Gertrud: >Well, and are you satisfied with your so learned husband?< Gertrud answered laughing: >O yes, I am quite satisfied with him and I am not afraid either, although he is so educated.< I am quite sure that Frederick and Gertrud are bringing up their little daughter, baptized by me, well and truly Catholic. (…) In a certain town that I visited during my missionary travels, the militia learned where I had said Mass. This caused me great difficulties, which I will tell you about in the third part of this paper. The militia commander summoned the young woman of that house. She was a woman of about 35 years, a German, a devout Catholic, a good wife and mother of three children. We will call her Bonifatia (the doer of good) here with us. Her eldest son was 14 years old and in the seventh grade. We will call him Pius (the pious).

The militia commander sharply reproached Bonifatia for taking in a >Popen< in her house, but especially for praying together with her children. He demanded from her a promise that the children would stop praying. Bonifatia flatly refused to make such a promise. Then the commander began to threaten her that he could order to take away her children and bring them to a >djetdom<, i.e. an orphanage, where they would be brought up to be honest citizens of the Soviet Union. Bonifatia replied: „If you take the children away from their biological mother, we still have a second mother in heaven - the Mother of God. I will pray to her for my children, and even you cannot take my children away from that mother. < It must be admitted that it was an answer that deserves to be registered in the records of the martyrs. But it must also be explained that it was only empty threats of that militia captain who had tried to intimidate the brave Bonifatia. The law of the USSR does not allow taking away a mother's children only because she prays with them. It is permissible to do so if the parents refuse to send their children to school, as happens with certain extreme sectarians. or if the children are brought up badly by their parents, for example, if both parents are alcoholics. In addition to the militia commander, the head of the school where her two older children go had Bonifatia called to him. The latter spoke to her quite politely. He tried to convince her that it would be detrimental to her education if her children heard something different at school than they did at home. For the good of her children, he said, Bonifatia should give up her religious education, while she herself could pray as much as she wished. Bonifatia listened patiently to the principal's explanations and, of course, did not promise anything. Then the principal had 14-year-old Pius called to him as well and explained to him that, as a future builder of communism, he would have to renounce his faith and prayer completely. Pius also listened to the principal's explanations without promising anything. The answer that Bonifatia and Pius gave to all these remonstrances about half a year later was the following: Bonifatia and Pius went to Karagan-da, immediately reported to me, both made confession and communicated.
five years passed. For his cousin's wedding (after the church wedding, of course), Pius once again came to Karaganda, but this time alone, without his mother. Pius was already a young man of 19 years and had already finished secondary school. He was already starting to work in his profession, but then he contacted me again, confessed and communicated. At the wedding he set an uplifting example by resolutely refusing to drink alcohol. Then it also became apparent that Pius could not dance. The young girls tried to teach him this art, but he did not even show interest in dancing. In Karaganda a German family settled down firmly. It came from far away and had never seen a priest, let alone a church yet. This family was quite neglected. Father and mother, middle-aged people, lived together without marriage, the father was Protestant, the mother Catholic. The older daughter was also married to a Protestant and also without a marriage ceremony. Besides them, there were three younger children in this family: two boys and a girl. Those children were not even baptized. But the merit of the mother of this family, whom we will call Constantia (the steadfast one), was based on the fact that they all reported to the priest soon after their arrival in Karaganda. With this family there was quite a lot of work. First of all, they had to be taught the faith and prayers, because they knew nothing at all. All five of them came to First Communion: the three children, the older daughter, who was already married, and the mother, Constantia, herself, who had never confessed before in her entire life. Both mother and daughter were married in church to their husbands, who, though not converts to the Catholic faith, were at least quite happy to attend Catholic devotions. Constantia was indeed converted. From a poor, degenerate >Soviet citizen< (i. Orig. >grasch-danka< - the translator) she became a devout Catholic and zealous Christian mother. Under her leadership the children grew up and did not stop praying as it happens in different families. These children prayed systematically and often, and also gladly received the Holy Sacraments. The eldest daughter is now a pious young woman who lives well and peacefully with her husband, she also brings up her two children. The younger daughter has become a nice, bright and pious girl. The elder son is now doing his military service. When he came to Karaganda on leave, he immediately used this opportunity to confess and communicate. The younger son is most interested in soccer, but Mrs. Konstantia is already watching over him so that he does not forget prayer and God above soccer. It happened in Karaganda in January 1959 during the pre-trial detention, right after my third detention. The investigating judge with the rank of captain was a calm man by nature and always polite to me. So he arranged a confrontation with the heroine of this example, whom we will call Audatia (the brave one). Mrs. Au-datia, who was about 30 years old at the time, is a German and had previously been a Protestant. Under the influence of her devout Catholic friend, she converted to the Catholic faith; I baptized her. From her baptism Audatia became a convinced and devout Catholic. Why I was given a confrontation with her in particular, I don't know exactly. Probably they wanted to elicit statements from her that I had forced her to be baptized, which would have inevitably meant that I was trying to >impose< Catholicism in Karaganda. Audatia came to the confrontation with her head held high. One could immediately see that she was not afraid at all. The examining magistrate began to write the protocol of this confrontation. What he wrote there I do not know, but his dialogue with Audatia went as follows: After taking down the particulars, he asked, „Are you acquainted with the Bukowinski?“ Audatia {sharp and loud}: >Yes, even very well acquainted.< The examining magistrate: >And what was your attitude towards Bukowinski? Did you get along well, or were there misunderstandings between you, and what kind?“ Audatia (sharper and louder): >Yes, we always got along well, very well in fact, and it couldn't be otherwise
because he is a very good and calm person. But I have a question for you: why do you arrest such a good man? such a good person? Here in Karaganda, a woman cannot cross the street without being harassed. There are a lot of hooligans who steal people's coats, but you don't arrest them. What do you arrest such a person as Bukovinsky for? I can't understand such a thing!“ And in this sense the bold Audatia continued to answer. Of course, the whole confrontation came to nothing. Audatia left as she had come, with her head held high. I was now left alone in the room with the examining magistrate. And he summarized his impressions, which he had received from this confrontation, in this way: >Now you see what kind of woman this is, a nastojaschtschaja (real) fanatic, with whom one cannot even talk calmly. Da, da Bukovinsky, ty mnogo naroda isportil (Yes, yes Bukovinsky, you messed up many people).“ Off Part 3: To my friends, the priests Becht often priests ask me how you can do pastoral care without a church. However, one can? After all, in the twelve years of my work in Karaganda, I had a little church for only one year, and for eleven years I have been working without a church and without a house of prayer. There was a time when people in various places began to open very small churches, or rather chapels, but without the permission of the local authorities. I will report here how it was in Karaganda. It is necessary to know that there was a time when there were many Catholic priests in Karaganda who were sent there. One of these priests - a Lithuanian - who had a good command of the German language, opened such a small church for the Germans in the spring of 1956 in the center of the city, but by no means in its representative part. Moved by his example, I then tried to open another little church for the Poles in a suburb where most of them live. (...) There was also a Ukrainian church. (...) Unfortunately, these three little churches lived in Karaganda only for a very short time. In the spring of 1957 the authorities closed the Ukrainian church, then in May the German one, and on July 4 of the same year the Polish one. Before my trip to Poland (1969), news came that the German priest Michael Köhler had received permission from the authorities to work as a pastor in Kyrgyzstan. Probably it is a verbal permission and not a registration, although in SU all surprises are possible, but mostly negative and rarely positive. So what does my chaplaincy work look like in Karaganda without a place of worship? I am a constant peddler. (...) Karaganda is very big. My favorite means of transportation is a car. I do not own a car and could not own it. - Sometimes I benefit from the charity of my parishioners, but most of the time I pay for the ride myself. This is the easiest way to transport not only the „spiritual“ person, but also his church paraphernalia, without attracting attention. Attendance at church services in Karaganda is quite large. On Sundays, no less than 100 people come to the Holy Mass. On weekdays, about 50 people gather. On Sundays, the parish holds devotions even without a priest, because it is impossible for everyone to attend the Mass celebrated by the parish priest. (...) Slowly we are introducing more and more the national language into the Holy Mass. It is easier with the silent Mass, but more difficult with the sung Mass, because we do not have sheet music for the Mass chants in Polish and German. The Germans already sing the Lord's Prayer in German, the Poles do it not badly either, only in Polish. In other localities the art of chanting is not yet so widespread. One must also know how to help oneself with the diversity of languages. It happens that both Poles and Germans attend Holy Mass together. Then I do it like this: I read the Lectio and the Gospel in both languages, first of all in the language of the hosts, and I give the homily in Russian, because everyone understands this language. But most of the time in Karaganda I preach in German, because there are far more Germans than Poles; (...) I will tell you more about the mass baptisms when I discuss my missionary journeys. I want to emphasize that here, far more often than in Catholic countries, one has to baptize large children of school age, growing adolescents and even completely adult people. For lack of time, the „ritum parvulum“ is also used for the baptism of adults. But the typical feature in the administration of
baptism in the USSR is the often occurring necessity of conditional baptism. In all those localities, and these are very many, where there is not a single priest in the vicinity, baptism by lay Catholics - which is also very true - is quite common. Usually some old granny, highly esteemed in the area in question, baptizes. The Poles call it water baptism and the Germans - emergency baptism. (…) Among the Catholic Germans the emergency baptism is also very common. Where there is no parish priest, the bride and groom swear the oath of marriage in the presence of two Catholic witnesses. This is then already the proper, sacramental marriage. When such spouses later meet a priest, they both confess, communicate and renew their marriage oath before this priest, who then blesses their marriage covenant. Unfortunately, the Poles do not know this emergency marriage and therefore do not use it. It often happens that the parents bless the bride and groom before the wedding with images of saints, but an oath is not taken. (…) Once, after an appropriate preparation, I baptized a Turkmen and gave him the marriage blessing with a German, with whom, by the way, he had already lived before. At the baptism he got the name Alexander and is known in his neighborhood by the pet name >Saschka<. Now this Saschka has become a very zealous Catholic and has learned various German prayers. He often goes to church services, to confession and to Holy Communion. If some young and lazy German man does not want to go to confession, especially Easter confession, his mommy and grandma show him Sashka as an example. In Karaganda we prepare children and young people for First Communion during the summer vacations. On average, a group consists of ten to 15 children who are at least nine years old, but sometimes there are larger groups of 20 to 25 children. German children first go to a catechist: there are a few of them in Karaganda, and they teach the children everything that needs to be learned by heart. Only then do they come to me. Polish children come to me right away, because there is no catechist for them, but then they usually study with me two days longer than the German children. (…) German children usually study with me for three days; they then come to me twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. The fourth day is for confession, for the children and their family members. On the fifth day, in the morning or in the evening, the solemn First Holy Communion takes place. I hardly need to add how, in the circumstances prevailing in the SU, confession (well emphasized: the first one) is important, and I spare no effort to make it quite effective. I speak Russian to both the German and Polish children, but I add quite a few explanations in German or Polish. (…) Of course, the children are dressed accordingly, in little white dresses or white shirts. I try to make the Holy Mass quite solemn, with beautiful songs and my short but very heartfelt speech before Holy Communion. The celebration ends with a blessing with the Holy Sacrament, then the children receive pictures of the saints as a memento. Unfortunately, everything is very modest according to our circumstances, but the children are also pleased with the pictures, because they have never seen more beautiful ones. (…) The clergy never attend the weddings, nor the funerals in the cemetery. We often bless the graves, but not at the burial. In Karaganda, the priest usually reads the Mass for the dead and sings the >Libera me Domine< at home, next to the dead. If time permits If time permits, confessions are said, and the whole family communicates during the funeral Mass. Everyone goes to the cemetery without a priest, yet both the Germans and the Poles adhere to a Christian burial with prayers and funeral songs. (…) A cross is always placed on the grave, although the agitation is often to place a star instead: in such cases the burial is then paid for. Only once did I see a cross and a star on the same grave. The Germans always put an inscription on the cross in German, although it is usually not without spelling mistakes. The Poles write in Polish, but more and more often you can find
Russian inscriptions on Polish graves, because no one in the family is able to write a Polish text. (...) Aus Part 4: Missionary journeys and related difficulties Not counting the shorter missionary journeys to nearby towns, because there were such as well, I made a total of eight large missionary expeditions. Five of them took place before my arrest, and the last three in the years after my release from prison. Of these eight mission expeditions, four were to Turkestan, one to a republic in the extreme southern part of the USSR, on the border of Afghanistan. Quite a lot of Catholic Germans who lived in the Odessa area before the war have been living there since 1947. (...) During a missionary trip one has to choose the house for the missionary work even more carefully than in Karaganda itself. Once, it was 1963, I came to Tajikistan to a German who had invited me. The inhabitants of the house greeted me very warmly and then said: „Father, we must warn you that in the other side of the street lives a not good person (so in the orig. - the translator); he indicates. < Nevertheless, I worked with these people, read the Holy Mass in the early morning and then immediately moved to another apartment offered to me, where I could work in peace for a few more days. (...) The expulsions were different: there were some without reprimand, and others where I was strictly warned. In this way I was >ceremoniously* expelled from Semipalatinsk in 1958 and from Aktyubinsk in 1963. In Semipalatinsk the matter was complicated in that two pious Germans from Karaganda accompanied me on this missionary trip: Miss Gertrud Dötzel and Miss Klara Roninke. Klara died a year ago, and Gertrud is still working today. She was arrested before for her piety and spent eight years in prison. Klara had never experienced anything like that. So in a settlement near Semipalatinsk we were all stopped together: the chairman of the Selsovjet (village council - editor) and the chairman of the selsoviet called the officials of the security service in Semipalatinsk. Their two came, put all three of us in a car and took us to Semipalatinsk. There we were subjected to a kind of examination for two days, but we were allowed to stay overnight with our acquaintances in the city. Gertrud. already „hardened“, held herself very bravely, but poor Klara was scared to death. They both kept repeating: >All for you, Sacred Heart of Jesus!< (<the last exclamation so in the Orig. - the Transl.>). And I could not regret enough that I had taken them both on this journey, and I promised myself not to take anyone else with me, and I kept to it. I was not afraid of my own arrest, but I was afraid of that of Klara and Gertrud. Fortunately, on the third day I was given a written promise that we would leave the city immediately. Then we happily left the „hospitable rooms“ of the Semipalatinsk Security Office. (...) In 1963 in Aktyubinsk I was well aware of the fact that we could not safely continue working there, but I felt sorry for the community members, because Aktyubinsk is quite a big city, where it is not so easy to find a >Popen<. So I continued to work, and even quite intensively, for two weeks in Aktyubinsk. One day in the morning there was a solemn Holy Communion. I kept the children there for a while after the Holy Mass. But then the housewife came to me and pointed through the window: two, three houses away there was a car, around which two figures were moving, always looking in the direction of our house. Immediately I ordered the children to go away, there were about ten present, then I also asked the adults to slowly leave the house. I had breakfast. There were only a few people left in the house. „Father, why don't you go to another house please, just a few streets away; we'll bring your things later.“ - „No, they'll arrest me right there on the street. At the same time, if you are arrested, you must already have a bit of laundry and a few other indispensable things with you. We will be waiting for them here.“ (...) Only when it got dark, and it was November, those two men came to get me and took me along with my suitcases. They took me to the militia and from there, after a short interrogation, to the Office for State Security. Again, just as in Semipalatinsk, a kind of investigation was initiated, which lasted three days. (...) On the evening of the third day I had to sign an undertaking that I would return to Karaganda
immediately and that I would never come to Aktyubinsk again, as I had been ordered to do in Semipalatinsk. Then I was handed over to the militia commander, who quite kindly took me directly to the train station in his own car and left me there alone with my luggage, saying as we parted: >We believe you will fulfill your obligation and leave immediately and not visit your acquaintances here any more. Just in case, however, we have instructed the militia post at the station to keep an eye on you." In Semipalatinsk there was a possibility to notify our community members of the compulsory departure to Karaganda. In Aktyubinsk, on the other hand, there was no such possibility. Our community was convinced that I was in prison. Good women even brought food packages for me there, and when they were told that there were no Bukovinsky in the prison, they simply did not want to believe it. (...) I have been living with Germans for seven years now. My present hosts, Kasper and Katharina Haag, are a childless couple about my age. Their only son was lost during the war. They come from the village of Kleinliebental near Odessa. To conclude this memoir of my last imprisonment, I want to tell you about my time of investigation and about the court proceedings. The investigation was conducted quite politely, without any distortion of my statements in the protocol written by the examining magistrate. After the investigation was over, I was given the minutes of the testimony to read, by witnesses who had been appointed by the investigating authority. Testimonies were available not only from Karaganda, but also from some other localities I had visited during my missionary journey. Among these witnesses there were Poles, but also Germans. I was pleased to see that none of them had incriminated me with their statements. When asked whether Bukovinsky had said anything against the Soviet power, they answered unanimously that Bukovinsky never said anything of the kind. On the contrary, Bukovinsky said that one should fulfill one's civic duties and work honestly (tschestno truditsja). (...) I was offered a lawyer, but I refused and declared that I would defend myself. (...) At the end of the trial, the president of the court gave me the floor, since I did not want to have a lawyer, so that I could give my defense speech. For this defense speech - the only one in my life - I prepared myself very carefully in my solitary cell. I will mention the main points of that speech here, because I think that its content is of general, and not only personal, importance. Following the example of St. Paul, who spoke in Athens on the Areopagus, I began my speech with the >captatio benevolentiae“ (courting the favor of the audience with certain phrases - red.). Publicly I thanked for the good and polite treatment during the investigation?-detention and before the court. I explained that I did not want to defend myself, as I did not feel personally guilty towards the Soviet state. However, since „nemo judex in sua causa“, I leave my personal case with full confidence to the decision of the Soviet Court. However, I wish to take advantage of this opportunity, which I have received for the first time in my life from the Soviet authorities, to defend those for whom I have worked during the past years. „The great October Socialist Revolution proclaimed to the whole world the slogan of political, social and economic freedom. But it should not be forgotten that freedom refers to national and faith relations. Those people whom I want to defend here are Germans and Poles. They were brought to this country. But can they really feel comfortable here? If a group of Orthodox Russians had been brought to the land of the Buryats and ordered to live there, and if there had been no Russian school there - no Soviet school - and if those Russians had then soon found that their children spoke Russian less and less, even that they were ashamed of the Russian language, but instead use the language of the Buryats more and more often, and are educated to become devout Buddhists, but not Orthodox Christians, then I ask the question whether those Russians - and you, citizen judges, are Russians
after all - could have been satisfied with their life in the land of the Buryats? So I dare to say that the Germans and the Poles in Karaganda are in just such a situation. As for the Poles, after twenty years in Kazakhstan they got three of their pastors. And now, after barely three years of work, these three priests are arrested, torn from the midst of the believing people, leaving the Kazakhstan Poles without priests again. What is more, if the government of the Polish People’s Republic had all the Orthodox priests arrested, with the Metropolitan of Warsaw at the head, and if the entire Orthodox population in Poland were left without a single “bat-yushka” - could they possibly be satisfied, rather: could Moscow possibly be satisfied? I do not ask for anything for myself, but I ask for consideration of my words for the good of believing Catholics in Kazakhstan. I would like to hope that these words of mine will not turn out to be a call in the desert, but will reach Alma-Ata and Moscow. It once happened that I was forbidden to visit a dying sick person in order to prepare her for a good, Christian death. May it happen that all of us in the USSR understand that the first right of every man, and even more of a believing man, is the right to God.< My speech was listened to very carefully. It was recorded in the minutes. The judges left the hall to deliberate. After a few minutes they came back, and the presiding judge announced the verdict that sentenced me to three years of imprisonment. I replied in the negative to the chairman’s question as to whether I wanted to appeal. In the corridor outside the courtroom, several community members were waiting for the verdict. I myself told them that I had been sentenced to only three years. I could tell from the smiling faces of the men that they were happy with me about the lenient sentence. Now I said goodbye to my dear parishioners according to Catholic custom: >Praise be to Jesus Christ.“ Then I sat down in the already waiting car, where my two companions were already waiting for me, and drove away from there, touched by the farewell from my parish, but not at all depressed.“ ======The Memoirs of Prelate Michael Köhler====== Shortly before his Diamond Jubilee as a priest (1981), Prelate Michael Köhler dictated the following memoir:. „From Past and Present. A sorrowful yet happy life of 84 years.“ We print them for the first time in full, preserving the archaic German. Franzfeld, a small village in the Ukraine, in southern Russia, settled according to the manifesto of the Empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, in the years of immigration from Germany to Russia from 1804 to 1808, lies on the Dnjesterliman not far from Odessa. It counts about two thousand souls of pure Catholic denomination. The occupation of the inhabitants of this German colony is mainly agriculture and viticulture. From the very beginning of their settlement, the plain and simple peasants were always attended by clergymen because of their deep faith. Initially they were taken care of by Polish clergymen and until the end by local priests. Among the many German colonies in the Volga region, Caucasus, Crimea and Ukraina, which belongs to the Saratov diocese, Franzfeld has distinguished itself by the fact that 18 priests, among them a bishop Zerr, have come from Franzfeld, but also from Landau, the colony of Beresan of a larger Catholic community 22 priests, also a bishop Glaser, all of them from the Saratov seminary. Also the present Prelate Michael Köhler, as the eighteenth priest from Franzfeld, is still alive today at the age of 84 and works in the city of Frunse in Kyrgyzstan as the only remaining German priest of our diocese. We will speak about him further on. The Köhler family belonged to the basic tribe at the settlement of the village of Franzfeld. The penultimate tribe counted nine children - six sons and three daughters - all of them emigrated to various new settlements, chutors and towns, only Joseph Köhler, married to Agata Kaiser, remained in the native village and these are the grandparents to Prelate M. Köhler. The happy marriage was blessed with three sons and two daughters. The eldest son Jakob, born in 1872, married Franziska Kraft from Johannestal, born in 1873 - these are the parents to Pralat Köhler. It was custom at that time that the married sons could live with the parents at five years. Thus also Jakob with his family remained five years in the parents' house, although they were separated, and
drove your economy alone, so they took the father's economy also. As the daughter of a well-off farmer, Franziska received from her father Josef Kraft two horses, four cows and three cattle, beautiful furniture and other rich dowries, so that the young family of Jakob and Franziska could soon reach a prosperous middle class. The first child Baltasar died soon after birth, soon a daughter Maria was born, and a year and a half a son Joseph. It was already close to the fifth year and Jacob with his wife Franziska and two children emigrated from Franzfeld. Grandfather Josef Kraft moved them to Johannestal-Mannheim parish. It was the year 1897, on October 30, when a child from this family was born as the third living one. He was named Michael at the Holy Baptism in the parish church in Mannheim, where Father Jakob Dobrowosly was the parish priest. And this is little Michael, who today is already 84 years old. He still remembers many things from his three years of age. He was a terror for us children, because he wore a beard; whoever was not good was to be sold to him, also little Michael killed some ducklings and the older sister Mary had to be beaten for it; the dog bit the brother Joseph and the grandfather's horse went mad and had to be shot, all this still remembers him today. When little Michael was four years old, his parents moved to Kashara, Ponyatovka parish, again at the behest of his grandfather Kraft. Arrived there in 1903, the fourth child Veronika was born. The memory of that time also tells us something about it: „One day Michele found a hammer in the ash heap, with which the sugar loaf was beaten off. This hammer traveled with his parents through Europe during the war of 1942 and today, after 80 years, it still lies on the table of the Prelate as a relic of his youth and a memory of his dear parents. The parents were not to remain in Kashara for long; after they had again been given a child, the fourth living child with the name Veronica. So they again followed the call of grandfather Kraft and moved to Chutor Mala-shevich, where 50 desjatines of land were sold next to grandfather's estate. It was around 1904, when the Japanese war had disturbed Russia. Thank God, the father was spared and did not gain weight. Arrived 1905 now the youngest sister Lydia was born. It came now for the alternate children, Mary, Joseph and Michael the school time. In the meantime, grandfather Joseph Köhler came as a guest to visit his children at Chutor Malasche-witsch. At supper he saw the family and said: „Maria could be a good landlady, she can already milk three cows, and she also knows how to cook. Joseph enjoys horses, that's what a farmer gives, but this one, pointing at Michael, seems to turn a blind eye when he looks at the sun, that's not what a farmer gives. The mother took the word and said yes, he wants to learn and it gives itself to him, we want to let him learn. And so they looked for ways and the possibility to let little Michael learn. Let's talk about the future student himself. I came to Georgiental to the secretary of the Mannheim parish to mother's sister Aunt Margarita (called Bas Gretel). She was married to Joseph Bartie from Selz, who had been a teacher, village clerk and church servant here in Georgiental; they had two sons. Johannes learned agriculture from uncle Karl Kraft and Andreas studied in Odessa in the Gymnasium; the only and eldest daughter Katharina (Katja) provided the economy with mother and thereby she heated with straw the school, the quarters and the Kanzelei. The straw had to be plucked with a hay bailer and carried in on the back. I certainly helped the poor and sickly sister Katja to share this burden. But the hardest part for her was the early and evening ringing of the angels in the church next door - a beautiful Gothic church. Once a month the priest - dean of Mannheim - visited it. Katja, only 16 years old, was afraid to pull the ropes on the bell alone in the dark in the Glock-kenhaus; I had to accompany her. I had good progress in school, but two years lasted happiness, then the dear aunt Margarita died. The house is now empty. Uncle Joseph Bartie, my confirmation godfather, married a widow from Kandel
with three daughters. She was a lovely woman and her name was Franziska Black. The half-sister Katja, now orphaned, suffered the most; she no longer had a mother. In the meantime, a German teacher with university education Georg Pe-trowitsch Schmidt founded a Progymnasium in Selz and because I also had an aunt Marianna there, married to Wendelin Bartie, my parents transferred me to Selz, which from then on became my second home. I studied there for two years, staying with my good uncle Wendelin and his good-hearted wife Marianna. Already my parents had to start paying - ten rubles for board and lodging and 60 rubles a year for school fees. Circumstances dictated that my parents transferred me to Karlsruhe in Beresan to Father Scherr’s grammar school. New circumstances, a new life from the beginning of 1911. ===Karlsruhe=== Among the many German colonies - settlements of the emigrants from Germany in the years 1805-1812 we find the name of the colony Karlsruhe in Beresan genant. In the first years of the twentieth century a young and very zealous priest Jakob Scherr, coming from Strasbourg in the Kuchurgan in the Odessa district, was appointed there by the bishop in Saratov. In addition to pastoral care in his parish, Fr. Jakob Scherr felt called to work in a social way for our German people. He founded an orphanage and collected parentless children in the surrounding area. They were educated by sacrificial, especially single and pious women - tertiaries like a kind of convent women, who gave them a profession. Among them was especially Gertruda Keller, Franziska Schmidt, Helene Scherer, Magdalene Seigfried and others showed themselves capable for years in the education of the children and in the management of the economy. In the years 1910-12, the orphanage already numbered more than 120 people. Even this was not enough for the zealous - the second Don Bosco Fr. Scherr; the orphanage had to be useful for someone else as well. He first founded a pro gymnasium, which later grew into a full gymnasium. The good but strict Fr. Scherr wanted to be useful to the colonists' sons and to form from them capable scholars for our Germanness in Russia. From this plantation came two priests (B. Syska and my little one), doctors, organists, teachers, doctors, agronomists and other professions. The life and education in this institution, although far, was similar to the hospitable seminary. Initially it was a closed institution - boarding school and teaching office under one roof, strict agenda, discipline. The orphanage provided good food, waiters, laundry, and every day Holy Mass and devotion to the Sacred Heart. This was taken care of by the pious Father Scherr, who after all had the head administration in his hands. The teachers were mostly university educated. And my pious and attentive parents sent me to this beautiful institution, where I was to receive education and training, but also to study and choose my worthy profession for life. It was God’s plan that in 1911, when I entered Karlsruhe, a young priest was employed as an educator, Father Franz Rauh. My whole attitude as a diligent and correct student apparently pleased the young Father, he preferred me and appointed me as censor and secretary. Without any particular suggestion from Father Rauh, an inner voice began to tell me that I should enter the seminary in Saratov. After a strict and thorough deputation examination I graduated from the progymnasium and in late 1913 I entered the seminary in Saratov. It was not too difficult for me to get used to the seminary discipline, because Karlsruhe, as I said, was a model. It is difficult to understand and describe how the young person felt at ease in an institution where the administration, educators and teachers replace the second parents; indescribable warmth and attention were shown to us by Father Rector Frison, Fr. Inspector Glaser, both later our bishops, Prelate Joseph Krusehinski, Fr. Augustin Baumtrog, Fr. Michael Wolf, Prelate A. Fleck, Fr. Andreas Zimmermann, Fr. Leo Weimayer, the Preposites Bader Wallieser, Weigel, Wolf; Kopp, Fröhlich - the later priests. Later, Fr. Neugum Joseph became the rector and in addition to that the war years, life was already more defective, the minor seminary was dissolved in 1918, the major clerical seminary was transferred to Odessa. There I finished the full course of philosophy and theology with three confratres and
received the ordination to the diaconate; I could not be ordained to the priesthood yet, because I was not yet 24 years old. For not quite three years I was a religion teacher in the colony of Selz, but already no longer in the school, but in the rectory together with Father Thauberger Johannes, who was the parish priest in Selz. Bishop Kessler emigrated abroad, Bishop Fri-son, parish priest in Symphoropol, was not allowed to administer, the diocese was administered by Prelate Joseph Kruschinsky. He ordered that the resigned Bishop Zerr, who lived in Selz, ordain me to the priesthood. On May 20, 1922, I was ordained a priest in Selz and on May 21, 1922, I held my Primitz there. Bishop Zerr wanted to be the parish priest in Selz and I was to be his vicar, and so I cared for Selz in the difficult years of famine for eight months, every day and all day visiting the sick, the hunger brought much sacrifice to death. For eight months I cared for the large community in Selz. Immensely hard times, the consequences of the famine turned the community into a hospital. I myself did not want to stay in Selz for the future, since I „grew up here and also had many relatives here: at my request, the Most Reverend Prelate Kruschinski appointed me as Apostolic Administrator to Speier, one of the largest colonies of our settlements with 4600 inhabitants. The local chaplain, Father Michael Rauch, who was ill with lung disease, resigned at the beginning of February, and so my appointment there was to provide the necessary replacement. A carriage with two horses was sent for me and on February 23, 1923 I arrived in Speier. Although here, too, the need was great in all respects, the faithful, together with the chairman of the village council Johann Wirz, prepared for me a solemn entrance, as it was customary in former times. Father Michael Rauh, although ill, received me in the church, he still lived in the rectory, which looked miserable with all the farm buildings: the cane roofs were covered and consumed as fire. For the time being, I could only occupy a small room in the cold rectory with my young sister Lidia, whom I had taken with me as a hostess (yes, there was already nothing left to eat in the parental home). My predecessor, Fr. Rauh, promised me absolutely no success in the parish of Speier, he came from the Volga region. His language, his behavior towards the parishioners indicated a weak relationship between the priest and his subordinates; mutual love was missing, the sense of sacrifice disappeared, so that the sick priest starved, so to speak. One might think that such a picture should have taken away my courage? Not at all, I have always been happy in my life, even in the most difficult circumstances, I have never lost heart. There used to be large books with hard and good covers, still clean of any inscriptions. I took one of these books under my arm and began to write down from house to house all the members down to the smallest child; in the process I got acquainted with the people, listened to their needs and complaints, as well as won them over for me as their future pastor. This went on day after day for three months. In the afternoon at 4 o'clock I heard the confessions of those who had already been won. On Sunday I went to the pulpit and imagine, towards Easter the otherwise empty church was already well filled. In the meantime, I would like to make two important encounters known to the readers here: I met on these so-called round trips an elderly man named Kuhn Ignaz, he was in the village from the beginning of 1917 also in the chancery a predecessor and fought for the good of the people. Dear Father, he spoke to me on the street, you have been sent here to our parish, we are happy about it, but listen to me, don't do it like your predecessor, Father Rauh; it was in 1918, when the Germans wanted to occupy Ukraine, they were also here with us in Speier and for no reason threw eight of us, including me, into the cellar under the school, we were to be shot without trial. Our women first asked Father Rauh to take care of us, but Father Rauh cancelled. They ran on foot in a hurry to Karlsruhe to Father Scherer Jakob. The latter, a true man of the people
and friend of the poor and afflicted, listened to our women, immediately ordered his old foxes to be harnessed and at a gallop they headed for Speier. He went without fear to the chancellery where the German officers were sitting. What is going on, why have you appointed these men? I will not leave until they are all freed. It has happened, we have been freed and we are still alive today. Don't do like Father Rauh and the people will love you. This Ignaz Kuhn became a churchgoer and went to the holy sacraments from then on. Another instructive story for me: When I came to Speier, an educated woman worked as a teacher in the elementary school. She was a deserted wife of her husband Kurt Engel and had two little boys of about 10-12 years with her. She often visited the parsonage and showed interest in the Catholic faith, also this Konkordia Iwanowna Engel had accepted the Catholic faith a little later. In the parish as well as in the church, this well-developed Concordia Ivanovna observed my zeal and one day she said to me: „Mr. Paler, I see that you want to convert all people according to your way, you will not succeed, because people are educated in many ways, I advise you: Take man as he is, but not as you want him to be, see in him only the good, but not the evil. Cover the evil with the good and you will succeed. With force you sometimes break iron, but rarely the character and conviction of man. Already 58 years have passed and I have not forgotten the advice of this experienced woman, yes, conversely, always applied in life and with success. The big church soon became wine. The church attendance grew more and more, under the NEP system people were already better off, the idea of enlarging the church matured, it happened ann. i926. It went on like this until 1928-29. The shadow of sorrow and visitation moved into many families, with tears they went out from our midst into the wide unknown world. In anticipation of a dire future, spiritual and material life began to disintegrate. I, too, had to say goodbye to my parish for eternity, on the date of June 23, 1934, and at the same time in 1935, twelve of us met with our leader, the Apostolic Vicar Joseph Krushinski, in Camera N 1 of the Odessa prison. Now from it: Mrt njir they built the railroad line from Temirtau to the Tashtagol mountains, digging with the spade and the shovel and filling valleys. After a year they went to the far east to the beautiful Jedenland of Birobidzhan, but all fragmented, each to a different area, so that in thirteen years I have not met a Catholic priest. No pen is able to describe how much misery, diseases, hunger and thirst, cold and heat a person is able to go through and still stay alive! Nevertheless, it would like to be recorded in the annals of heaven, the ways of God are wonderful and wise, who can recognize them! In the exyl from 1947 to 1957 man is partly freer, I could already take important positions, in the meantime I became a construction technician in the I became a construction engineer in the district village Bogolyubovo in the north of Kazakhstan. I was able to take my old, half-starved mother to live with me, and later my sister Veronika from Krasnoyarsk. As a director's assistant I managed to raise a last-place combine to the first one. Certainly, I was able to perform core spiritual functions, but only after I retired in 1957, and after I left the combine and immediately went to Yurga, I started to fulfill my spiritual duties. Although still illegal, I visited many hundreds of parishes in all corners where only our Catholics lived. I spent four years in Yurga with little disturbance, but the time came when I was harassed and pushed away. I had to leave and settled with my two sisters Maria and Veronica and my old mother in Merke - a district in Kazakhstan between Dzhambul and Frunze. ===Life in the rayon center Merke from 1961 to 1969=== From Yurga to Merke we arrived with our old mother and two sisters Maria and Veronika on March 27, 1961. Merke is a big rayon center in South Kazakhstan between Dzhambul and Frunze. We bought with the sisters a spacious house with a yard kitchen. But already eight days on April 6 our dear little mother died of old age at the age of 88. She started the burial in the Merke cemetery of all the dead from our family, five of whom are buried today. It turned out later that, in addition to my relatives, there are many Catholics living in Merke from various former places of
residence. Every day I celebrated Holy Mass in our house, also on Sundays and Saturdays in the private houses of the faithful. It is remarkable that in the nine years that I spent in Merke, I was never disturbed by the authorities, although I openly performed all functions such as baptisms, weddings, funerals. Man has not forbidden me, because I was also active as a pensioner in civic affairs. I actively participated in road construction. I was always consulted in the Poselkovsky. I was often called to visit the sick from Dzhambul to Frunze, especially after the temporary church in Kant was closed and Father Anthony Sheshkevichus went into exile. The time came when Moscow gave the order to register the religious communities of the Catholics in the Asiatic Russia and to freely practice the profession of faith. The first parish was registered in the city of Frunze - Kyrgyzstan. A board of twenty members was formed, headed by Mumber Andreas and Rojek Franz. They bought a private house and transformed it into a prayer house - eight meters wide and nine and a half long, but only three meters high, it always lacked the necessary cubature when the faithful attended church, where at three hundred people crowded into the building. The spiritual administration was lacking, the pastor was missing. I was offered this position in the first place, I refused because of my age - I was 72 years old, other candidates seemed to be unacceptable. My person was once again mentioned to the ministry. Shakolotov and his assistant Vyghchnalwqv, the representatives of religious affairs at the Ministry of Kyrgyzstan, sent for me, since I lived in Merke, and made an urgent request to me to accept the parish post, since I am a native priest of this German nation and many people know me from the Saratov diocese. They emphasized that my twenty-third separation from the altar - prison and exile would have no meaning anymore, at that time the circumstances were such. I accepted and immediately they gave me a certificate that I was free to pastor Frunze, and so I accepted the parish on July 14, 1969. My sisters lived in Merke for half a year, because we had to sell our house there first, in order to be able to buy our own house in Frunze. In this half year I went every week from Merke on Sunday to Frunse on the bus until we had our own house in Frunze in January 1970. I had to go through many difficulties from inside and outside, which aggravated the otherwise undermined health; already in 1971 I fell ill with hemorrhage in the brain and in 1973 with a deep and severe infarct-miacardia, I had to stay in bed for three months and only the prayer of the faithful and the extraordinary care and knowledge of my family doctor Silbermann Faina Jak. saved my life. With this weak health I could no longer take care of the parish alone and I was forced to look for a vicar - assistant priest, which I was promised on acceptance. I asked for Father Gottlieb-Georg Todatschitsch from Makinsk, who worked there at the sawmill in the combine. His registration here was difficult to obtain, since he belonged to the united Ukrainian priests, who were not recognized in our country at that time. Nevertheless, on my guarantee he was registered. We have been working together for eight years. An overview of the pastoral work among our German Catholics from the Saratov-Tyrsapol diocese, who from 1971 have been scattered in Asian Russia from the Urals to Sakhalin, from the far north to Ashkhabad, among many different nations, and unfortunately have lost most of their German national characteristics: We have 15 priests working here, of whom I Prelate Michael Kahler have remained the only and last native priest from the Saratov diocese at the age of 84 years and 59 years of priesthood: on May 20, 1982 I hope to celebrate my 60th anniversary as a priest, if it will be the will of God. Besides me, Ukrainians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles and an Austrian are German priests. One might think that the number 15 would not be small as a worker in the vineyard of the Lord - the quantity and the quality? Among us there are four octogenarians and above, four seventies and the rest a little younger. To this physically
deficient side is added the different education, the ignorance of the language, the tendency to introduce the Russian language in social intercourse, in the confessional, in the sermon and even at the altar, which often displaces the mother tongue. The greatest damage is done to our people by many of these clergymen, who not only introduce modernity and innovations against the will of the people, but impose them by force and threats, and try to eradicate the sacred - the tradition of the people coming from our bishops and priests, and even, one must say, disenfranchise our faithful people. In many cases, they also try to spread customs from other nations among our people by force. The poor people tolerate many things because there are no other priests to be hoped for and because they value the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass too highly. My fellow priests are not particularly well disposed towards me, because I am a strong opponent of modernity and do not care for and do not allow the degradation of Christianity by some harmful innovations. Also, I celebrate the Holy Mass according to the Missal corrected according to the Second Vatican Council of anno 1966 presented by Cardinal Cicogniani and Pope Paul as confirmed what only our faithful people desire. Honor and respect the expression - Vox populi - vox Dei, the voice of the people is the voice of God. For more than fifty years, the question of faith of our people has been shaken, and sometimes in such a way that it seems that there are no more traces, and yet what do we see? After the permission to register the congregation: What sacrifices our people make - buy houses, build churches, they show a living, even heroic faith, which they have received from our bishops and priests as a firm foundation, as it were, as a testament, from those who courageously faced martyrdom and pray in heaven for their parishioners, so that they remain strong in their faith and hold fast to their holy customs. And they want to take away these sanctuaries from the believing people and replace them with un-Christian novelties, make them un-Christians, sectants? No, there is no such thing, as long as I am still alive, I am ready to put my last efforts into it and to protect and defend our people, from whose midst I emerged. I am accused of not acting in accordance with the Second Vatican Council and the Pope. I reply: I am a disciple of the bishops and professors who have been taught by popes Leo XIII and Pius X patronized and ordered our Saratov Diocese; Pius X is already canonized. So God wanted to approve his teaching and method?! Serious and right-thinking higher clergymen only claim: Should you, Mr. Prelate, teach your people like the West, most of your people would fall away from the faith. And indeed, where the harmful innovations have been introduced, many have renounced the Church. In this sense and with this method I worked in the parish until the separation from it and now already in the thirteenth year here in Frunse, although I feel connected with Catholics living everywhere. In itself, the parish would be small and large, even with the more than twenty surrounding communities, but the need is great, the vineyard extensive, the workers few, from everywhere people call and ask for help. Even sometimes I have to stay alone and send the Father Vicar to help the needy. We have church services every day and also mostly in the afternoon, since believers often come from far away and from the periphery for confession, baptism, marriage, etc. On Sundays and feast days we have early Mass, Rosary or contemporary devotions, homily and High Mass alternately with the Father Vicar. If it is convenient, we also have a short instructional talk at the early Mass. Confessions are held every day and at any time. The outskirts are visited three or four times a year, according to a specific schedule, where all needs are certainly met. In the parishes there the faithful go together, hold devotions, rosary, May devotions and others, singing pious hymns mostly from the diocesan book „Alleluia“. These devotions take into account those people who can hardly come to the parish church, as some of them have to travel more than a hundred kilometers. In spite of all the good intentions, this kind of pastoral work is a patchwork compared to what we had in the orderly and closed parishes. You see, an important word is missing above - Christian teaching. In the parishes we had
the children in the school and the adults in the church for Christian instruction. We had a family book, in which all the Karr children up to the smallest child were written down, at that time we could look and find out the state of the family and at the same time of the parish - Easter confession, marriage, witnesses, first communion, emigration and the like. Now we are completely lacking this, people are out of our hands, we cannot reach them and if they do not come themselves, they are lost for the faith. The conclusion is that we have no youth and few children. If we have no offspring, we can expect them to die. One fights, one talks one's lungs sick, one feels unwell because one cannot fully fulfill one's professional duties. Church attendance Church attendance on Sundays and holidays would still be satisfactory to some extent, but on weekdays there are few visitors. The Friday of the Sacred Heart is still celebrated with confession and communion. The control of the distribution of the Holy Communion is fully in the hands of the priest, just as the frequent Communion, as in the past, is now cultivated and recommended. The Third Order of St. Francis - Tertiary is still in good use among our people. We are registered and under the control of the State, but we have no reason to complain that we are treated unjustly, we know our statutes and work undisturbed. Much also depends on the behavior of the clergy themselves towards the faithful and the state; one works with success, the other one is not loved and is turned away. Due to the unjust procedures and imperious behavior of the priests in some parishes, discord has arisen in the form of for and against. One of the greatest grievances is that we have no spiritual authority - neither bishop nor apostolic administrator, who should command and forbid, everyone acts according to his own sense and takes rights that are not his according to the code. As a result, the people suffer through disorientation even in matters of faith. Sometimes authoritarian greedy traits creep in, bordering on crime, for example, through reduction and commutation of the intentions of the holy masses. Certainly, as much as possible, care is taken, but sometimes selfishness and stubbornness prevail. Our people are grateful for this help, too, but they remember the times of prosperity, when the parish priest worked with warm hearts in the midst of the parish, blessedly and lovingly, and submitted himself to the bishop in Saratov, who gave an account every five years to the Holy Father, the Pope in Rome. With deep sighs one says: it was and never comes. ==The work of the priest in the parish now and in the past== As mentioned earlier, we German Catholics - colonists in Russia were united in a diocese of Tiraspol-Saratov on the territory of Samara, Saratov, the governorate along the Volga to Astrakhan, Caucasus, Crimea and Ukraina. We had a consistory, from which all the directives for the whole diocese emanated, from which the young priests were sent first as vicars to older clergymen and then as independent administrators to the parishes. Ten or twelve parishes formed a deanate, and the dean sometimes collected written or oral material from the parishes of his deanate about the condition and needs of the parishes and gave an account of it to the bishop. Although the administration of our diocese was very strict, it was considered by the popes in Rome to be one of the best dioceses. Also the bishops had to report personally to the Holy See - the Pope - every five years. The bishops also had to give a written and oral account every five years to the Holy See - the Pope. We had our typography, our newspaper - Rundschau, the Klemensblatt (in honor of the diocesan patron St. Clement), our own catechism and the small and large biblical history for catechesis. All this and the divine service together with the prayers were uniform for all priests and faithful, everywhere the Catholic came, he was at home. The clergy, educated and trained in a seminary and many of them with higher education in spiritual schools abroad, were all under the care and obedience of the diocesan bishop; they were first sent as vicar-assistant priests to an
experienced parish priest and later independently in the parish. If his work as administrator and pastor is recognized as good by the dean and at the same time by the community, he receives the title of curate and is allowed to wear the pelerina on his surtane. After a blessed work, the bishop gives him the rights as parish priest with all the rights and jurisdictions to take care of the parish. Some good pastors were in the same parish for more than 25 years and left a well-mannered and pious parish. Today, even after 40-50 years, people still speak well of such priests and order Holy Masses for their salvation. What rights and duties did a good pastor have in his parish? If he knew how to win the hearts of his parishioners from the very beginning, he was a father, caretaker, judge, mediator, teacher, spiritual guide, he stood at the bedside of the sick and prepared the sick for eternity and often mediated the question of the will for the descendants. He led the religious education in the school and in the Christian teaching in the church, his well-prepared sermons in the pulpit were the decisive guide for the faithful. His pious and devout behavior on the altar had an exemplary effect on the minds of all present, his care for a good choir of singers adorned the service, good and careful church fathers, overseers and altar servers facilitated his service. The care for pious associations - tertiaries, youth associations, admissions to various Masses, Marian Congregation, Brotherhood of Mount Carmel, perpetual adoration, etc. make reputation with God and people. Another very important thing is the keeping of the house book, where all the families are registered with all the members of the house, so that the parish priest always has a clear picture: who and when was married, went to the first Holy Communion, was born, died. Also the confession slips are written and noted down from it. Everything was in the hands of the priest, even the control over the distribution of Holy Communion was his. I note that the frequent Holy Communion, especially on the first Friday (Sacred Heart) of the month was well maintained. Working like this, we were used to in our diocese and felt quite happy. In this way, we each worked in our own parish until the time came to say goodbye, although with some limitations in the last five years. We all sensed what was in store for us, but we remained faithful to our vocation in place. After many, many years, we regained our strength and tried as much as possible to assist our people in the demands of faith. As we said earlier, our compatriots are scattered throughout the large areas of the Asian Bushland. Now and then, clergymen of different nations appeared and started to work privately and illegally, but they were always in danger of being imprisoned, which happened to some of them. There was still no permission to register the parishes and a priest. Finally, on January 23, 1969, the believers received permission from the city of Frunze and the surrounding settlements to form a religious community and to be registered. Mumber Andreas was elected as the predecessor. Mann bought a residential house according to the authority and converted it into a prayer house. The question now was who would be at the head of the community as pastor. The chairman Mumber Andreas and his assistant Rojek Franz first came to Merke, where I had already lived for nine years with my two sisters, and asked me to accept the parish. I refused because of my age, I was already 72 years old. Three other candidates were proposed to the ministry, but they were not accepted for various reasons. Now the authorities from the ministry sent a representative to Merke after me in Merke. They relied on the Moscow decrees of Kuroyedov V.A., the chairman of the Council of Ministers on religious issues. Despite my past - having been separated from the altar for 23 years - they registered me by order. On July 14, 1969 I accepted the parish. Nothing was missing at the altar, chalices, chasubles, books and other necessities were provided, I also had the most necessary things, but how and what and where to start pastoring? I thought of that beautiful work at home in my young priestly years, but now the circumstances are so very different than at that time. I looked up and a voice told me: Don't worry, I will put into your mouth what you have to say. Still the blood faltered in the veins with fear of those
terrible years when we were completely disenfranchised with the faithful in religious terms. The light of my former energy was not yet extinguished, I bravely went about it with insight and caution, some ships and stones damaged the little ship, soon I got blood circulation in the brain (well only mini) and had to rest for two and a half months and in 1973 a heavy infarct-miacard knocked me completely to the ground. I was allowed to have a vicar. But the choice was too small. There were no more of our priests, I was advised not to ask for one from the Baltic, because it was not reliable, and among the priests working here among our people I could choose only one, who had been taken to Makinsk as a worker on the wooden birch. It took a lot of effort until he was admitted to the registration, since he came from the so-called Uniate in the Transcarpathian region; he is a monastery man with the name Georg Todavchich, but mostly called Gottlieb (his monastery name), he is an educated priest and speaks relatively not bad German, good Russian, Czech and Hungarian. We have been working together in the parish for eight years now. Unfortunately, we cannot compare this work with the good conditions described above in the parish at home in our colonies in Ukraine and Volga region: we have absolutely no access to the school, we see the children only when we baptize them and when their parents bring them to the church prepared for the first Holy Communion. We do not see children in school until they are baptized when they are small and when their parents bring them to church for the first Holy Communion, well prepared, at the age of 8-9 and finally (and more and more rarely) for the church wedding; up to the age of 18 children should not go to church, according to the state law, but it is up to and the right of the parents to teach their children religion and bring them to church with them. Since people live scattered among different nations and confessions in towns and villages, it is also impossible to conduct pastoral care at home. Our main work is therefore in the church. 

In what area of our pastoral work can we act freely? We are free to preach in the church and at funerals, but only in the spirit of the Gospel. Theological and moral sermons, also catechesis for the youth from 18 years on are not forbidden: We can celebrate services with or without hymnal accompaniment at any time of the day or night; the administration of all six (priesthood not) sacraments we administer everywhere in the church, in the courtyard, in private homes preferably only in Catholic centers at any time. In recent years, when the registration of religious communities is more liberal, services and sacraments should be held only in prayer houses or churches. What about the means for the maintenance of the congregation? Answer: The religious congregations are maintained only by voluntary donations of the faithful in and outside the church, both in the beginning for the purchase or construction of the house of God and later for the maintenance of the serving persons and remonstrance work. Among the servants are: the clergy - pastors and vicars, organists, guards and cleaners. Their wages are determined by the congregation with the agreement of the servants. There is usually a building near the church, where the accountant's office, the cashier's office, the presbytery and the priest's office are located. Twice a month the servants receive their salary. The parish priest receives the faithful and discusses with them various ecclesiastical or family matters, also orders for Mass intentions are taken here. The celebration of death anniversaries and anniversaries are announced in the church so that the relatives can attend the requiem. Visits to the sick, that is, the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and Extreme Unction with the indulgence of the dead, still give us the opportunity to come into contact with many a Catholic family in remote areas: people are very generous to us and to the faithful. We are still satisfied with all this after the drought of more than 40 years, when we could hardly provide a sick person with great danger. But
a serious circumstance oppresses our faithful people: most of the priests working among
us are of different nationalities from different regions and with different customs, mostly
weak education and great unfounded inclination to the liberal innovation of modernism.
They go too far in introducing the Russian language into the church, in celebrating Mass in
Russian, in forcing the people and the singers to sing Russian street songs in church. The
result is discord and strife in and out of the church, between the congregation and the
clergy, and even though the need for pastors is great, some congregations are inclined to
have none at all rather than such a priest. Still it is due to the fact that we here in the
Asian part of the Soviet Union relocated German Catholics represent the diocese of
Saratov and are without administration in ecclesiastical terms, therefore even bishops
from foreign diocese have little concern for us. All 14. working (although little healthy and
able to work) in the midst of our people priests have all different methods, often
contradictory and harmful to our people, very rare that a parish is satisfied with such
treatment, very often with disenfranchisement, a kind of bludgeoning treatment,
ruthlessly against tradition and pious customs. Some parishes have begun to flourish,
with joy and love they have devoted all their strength and means to the construction of
the church, but unfortunately they have failed, the people have lost heart, disappointed,
the parish has come to nothing. The secular authorities were forced to have a bad opinion
of us. The nuisance is in front of our eyes. ===Briefly, about the condition of the church
buildings. Directly connected with the registration of congregations and clergy among the
believers of the German nation in Asiatic Russia was also the question of where to hold
services. At the beginning it was in vain to build a new church, because the land was in
state hands everywhere and could not be used for church purposes; the state allowed to
buy private houses, to remodel them only in the interior similar to a church - prayer
house. The outer form and the perimeter, as well as the height, could not be changed.
Thus, the church community of Frunze bought a private house, according to the order of
the city council on which part of the city, for ten thousand rubles with the funds of the
believers and reconstructed it into a prayer house, in which the service was held from
1969 to the spring of 1981. The same was done by the religious communities in: Kustanai,
Djambul, Dushanbe, Almaata, Karaganda, Zelinograd, Pavlodar. Already in 1977-78, the
government was more accommodating, more and more congregations were registered,
and they were allowed to reconstruct or build a new church on the same site. In 1979-80
Karaganda, Dushanbe, Kurgan Tyube, Dzhambul, Almaata received reconstructed and
rebuilt churches. Presented to the consecration and meritorious efforts were made by the
clergy: Father Dulauskas Albinus, Svidnitsky Joseph, the first in Karaganda, the second in
Dushanbe. We must not forget the laymen, the chairman of the Almaata parish Kaspar
Herbach and Joseph Kiefel, and in Kurgan Tyube the chairman Kiefel Rochus, who have
rendered great services in the construction of churches and the firm administration of the
parish. Now it is the turn of Frunze. For a long time the church could not accommodate all
the faithful. On Sundays and feast days many had to listen to the service in the courtyard
in the heat and rain. Inside the church, too, people were standing in full sweat; many
people who were not healthy became ill and had to be led out. The thought matured to
look for a way out. I, as an old and sick priest, have always had to struggle with breathing
during the service; I, too, in the first row, had to think about a transformation. As far as it
is given to me by God, I set to work on the plan of reconstruction and on the elaboration
with all the materials and manpower. A solid savings bank, which I personally carried,
gave me a guarantee that I would be able to cover the expenses and have a spacious
church. On New Year's Day 1981, I announced to the community that we have the
possibility of obtaining permission from the authorities for a new church. There will be no
lack of funds. As for the labor, I rely on the hands and art of my parishioners, since it will
be difficult to get from the side or a building organization, workers, I said to my audience,
but with Emst I had doubts, on the passive behavior of parishioners. Freshly ventured is half won. At the beginning of January 1981, we began to buy the necessary materials, knowing that this question would not be so easy to solve. The chairman of the church council Gottlieb Ivanovich Bruckmarin and the church father Franz Thomasovich Hatzenbühler from Karabalta masterfully and courageously went about the procurement of the building materials. The preparation for instruments, of sheet metal and iron work lay entirely on the treasurer Michael Happerl, who was extremely devoted to the church, the paints, painting oil, brushes and the like were well supplied by the revision chairman Aloysius Krug. For four months these expeditors were on their feet. Trucks with the necessary material appeared every day; the women at the church had taken a good part in unloading the building material. All calculated, the construction should begin immediately after Easter on April 22, 1981. But what happened? The projector and master builder, Prelate Michael Koehler, suddenly fell seriously ill with a festering pneumonia, and from February 2 until the end of the month he was hopelessly confined to bed. The faithful from all over and in the parish prayed without ceasing for the recovery of the only and last of our priests, the doctors especially the constant family doctor of the prelate Faina Silbermann put all their efforts to save the sick Pr. Köhler. At the end of February the change for the better came. Already the master builder could see through the window from his bed how Gottlieb Ivanovich was filling in the plan by driving the material given to him; sometimes it was impossible to watch how he struggled with unloading the heavy beams and boards. A week before Easter, 15 woodworkers prepared and stacked all the wood. The distribution of the workplaces in brigades was announced to the people beforehand. But my premature participation in the processing caused a relapse and I still had to stay in bed. Three days after Easter we approached, tore down the roof and an upper part of the wall, in full swing and with good success we lifted the building up to six meters and put the roof on the building in three weeks with completely new materia] - sheet metal. In my earlier fears I was wrong: every day without call men and women showed up here on our work and worked diligently no less than 30-40 people, on a Saturday came even 62 people, among them many youth of 20-30 years. Twice a day the workers were well fed and watered as needed. All were unanimous in building the house of God well and in the fastest time. All difficulties were overcome quite heroically, no complaining or disagreements were noticeable. It was not easy to provide the products for more than 2200 meals. This object lay heavily on the shoulders of the parish hostess Mathilde Holfinger and her assistant Katja Brikmann, also the cooking on top of it. Also the chairman Gottlieb Ivanovich Bruckmann and his brother Alexander always helped actively. At Easter we held services in the church yard, but at Pentecost, June 7, we moved into our new church. Six meters high with 16 ventilation devices gave the necessary temperature to the crowded crowd, more than 200 seats we gained by the reconstruction. People say the church is originally beautiful and looks homely and inspires everything to devotion. We all feel happy in our place of worship; the authorities have been very kind to us. We have given gifts and photo cards to the best workers - and all of them have worked well - and we have said seventy Holy Masses for them and their relatives. On the eve of Pentecost I fell on the cement floor in the courtyard, weakened by excessive exertion and stunned by the smell of paint, and wounded my face and head, so that at the dedication on Pentecost I had to stand on the new pulpit with my head bandaged for the sermon of thanksgiving. Slowly my health has improved and today we live in hope that with God’s help and His wise providence I will be able to celebrate my 60th anniversary as a priest on May 23, 1982. There are still six months from today until then, so we say: everything is in
the hands of God. We will let you hear from us after the expected jubilee on May 23, 1982.  
**Frunse, November 20, 1981**

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**Parishes of the Tiraspol Diocese before the October Revolution**


1. Saratoff, cathedral and parish church. 8150
Chapels: in the bishop's palace, in the seminary, in the churchyard, on the bishop's villa Branch in Cossack town (Pokroffsk) 
2nd Marienfeld, parish church H, 3780

**Josephstal branch**

Branch Kampschin. Prayer house S,

3. tsaritsyn. Parish church S, 600


Kasizkoje (Brabander), parish church H, built 4248 \ Beresoffka (Dehler), parish church H, 3980

Kamenka deanery

Kamenka, parish church S, 3467\ Hussars (Jelschanka), parish church H, 2300
Vollmar (Kopenka), parish church H, 1805 \ Schuck (Grjasnuwaika), parish church H, 4032
Degott branch, church S, chapel H.
Rothammel (Pamjatnoje), parish church H, 2185
Seewald, parish church H, 1353
Pfeifer (Guiluschka), Parish church H, 3608 \ Leichtling (Iljowlja), prayer house S, 2100 \ Charcoal burner, parish church H, 6373 \ Chapel in honor of finding the cross.
Semjonoffa, parish church H, 6577 chapel.\ Goebel (Ust-grjasnuicha), parish church H, 3738

Catherine town deanery

Catharine town, parish church S, built in 1815. 2910 \ Chapel in the cemetery.
Boregard branch, prayer house H.
Obermonjou, parish church S, 3052 \ Lucerne, parish church H, 4003 \ Zug, parish church H, 3744 \ Schoenchen (Paninskoye), parish church S, 3194
Solothurn, parish church H, 3948

Mariental deanery

Mariental (Tonkoschuroffka),
Parish church S, 8000
Chapels on the tomb of Jesuit Father Aloisius Moritz in the old churchyard, under the Kirgisenberg above the Karaman.
Rohleder (Rskaty), parish church S, 2389 \ Chapel in honor of the Mother of God.
Duke, parish church S, 1874 \ Chapels in the churchyard in honor of the Mother of Good Counsel.
Count, parish church H, 2153
Chapel in honor of St. Anthony of Padua.
Louis (Otrogoffka), parish church S, 5636
Chapel in honor of St. Anthony of Padua.
Liebental, parish church H, 4337 \ Branch of New Upper Monjou, church H.
Branch Neu-Mariental, church H.
Urbach branch, prayer house H.
Chornaya Padina, parish church H, 1072
Talosska branch, church H.
Marienburg, parish church H, 3044
Deanery Seelmann

Seelmann, parish church S, 8490
Chapel of the Perpetual Help of Mary.
New Colony (Kustarevo-Krasnorinoffka), parish church S, 3526 \ Hölzel, parish church S and H, 2360 \. Chapel in the churchyard.
Preuß, parish church H, 5889
Chapel in the churchyard.
Marienberg, parish church S, 3485
Streckerau, parish church H, 2435

Berdjansk deanery

Yenakyevo, parish church S, 2094 \. Branches: David-Oriofka, Selieger, Sofiejeffka, Juliano.
Bachmut, parish church S, 3200
Branches: Konstantinoffka, Druzkoffka, soda factory.
Jusoffka, parish church S (prayer house), 2500
Mariupol, parish church S, 3500
Eichwald, parish church S, 3497
Branches: Svvytotrizkoye, Adamoffka, Antonoffka, Novodvoroffka, Blumenfeld.
Göttland, parish church S, 1475
Branches: Kaiserdorf, Kampenau, Mjarau, Heitschule.
Großwerder, parish church S, 858 \. Branches: Catharinopol, Temruk, Alexandrovnovsk, Belozerkoffka, Belmanka.
Mountain valley, parish church S, 1526 \. Branches: Stepanofika (Grumfeld), New Yamburg, Taganrog, parish church S, 1315
Makejeffka, parish church S, 1034 \. Rostoff on the Don, parish church 5,5632 \. Chapel in the cemetery.
Novolijinka branch.

Deanery Ekaterinoslaff

Ekaterinoslaff, parish church S, 10555
Branches: Losovaya, Alexandroffsk, Grishino, Pavlograd. 1000
Yamburg, parish church S, 2901 \ Branches: Ekatermoffka, Rybalsk, Marieffka, Novoalexandroffka, Ehortitza, Sorochino.
Kamenskoye Factory, Parish Church S, 6872 \. Branches: Verkhnednyeproffsk, Zaporozye.
George Castle, parish church S, 1300 \ Branches: Dudnikovo, Yegoroffka, Elizavetoffka, Nikolajeffka, Marislaff, Moskoffka, Kuljmannsstal, Katharinenfeld.
Kostheim, parish church S, 2461
Branches: Leiterhausen, Marienheim, Alexanderheim, Tschechograd.
The Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union

Konstantonoffka, parish church S, 1798
Branch: Novo-Petroffka.

Nikolajeffka, parish church S, 1850 \.
Branches: Verkhne-Torgajeffka, Rubanoffka.

Maijinskje (Marienfeld), parish church S, 1868
Branches: Kochubejeffka, Feodoroffka.

Marjanoffka (Novo-Mannheim), parish church. 2776

Sympheropol deanery.

Sympheropol, parish church S, 4416 \.
Chapel in the churchyard.

Rose Valley (Shaban Uba), parish church S, 1205 \.
Branches: Altai, Dzajchi, Pustarchi, Argin, Aila-Kaeli.

Perekop, parish church S (without parishioners), the parish priest resides in Grigorjeffka. 2387
Branches: Preobrazenka, Belozerkoffka, Michailoffka, Alexandroffka, Novokieffka, Pavloffka,
Dagmaroffka, Novoalexjeffka. Alexandroffka, parish church S, 1770 \.
Karamin, S Parish Church, 413 \.
Branches: Dulal, Meshin.

Feodosia, Efar church S, 558 \.
This church was converted from a Tatar mosque into a Roman Catholic church.
Empress Kathanna II had given this mosque to Mohyleffer Archbishop Siestrzencevich in 1787 for remodeling into a Roman Catholic church by Prince Potyemkin along with 20,000 rubles for remodeling. The Archbishop expressly wrote this down in his diary, which he kept in Latin, published by Prof. Godlewski in the monumenta historica. This place of worship was appropriated by the Catholic Armenians without rights.

Branches: The Genoese chapel in Sudak, which also belongs to the Roman Catholic rite. This too was converted from a Tatar mosque into a Roman Catholic chapel, in 1822 by the Genoese consul Soldai Golan Christian Mondiano.
Kerch, parish church S, 1065 \.
Yalta, branch, of black polished granite. 575 \.
Sevastopol, parish church S, 3209

Nikolajeff deanery

Nikolajeff, parish church S, 8555 \.
Daniloffka (Heikoikkfa), chaplaincy church S, 800\.
This chaplaincy includes: Ochertino, Sosnoffka.

Kriwi-Nog, prayer house. 1334
Speyer, parish church S, 3316
Katharinental, parish church S, 1622
Chapel in the churchyard.
Karlsruhe, parish church S, 1933
Chapel on the churchyard.
Branch: Antonoffka.

Landau, parish church S, 2238 \.
Schoenfeld, parish church S, 1234 \.
Branches: Steinberg, Halbstadt, Petroffka.

Sulz, parish church S, 2051
Chapel in the churchyard.
Branch: Wotsche.
Blumenfeld, parish church S, 3080 \.
Christiana, parish church S, 2636 \.
Branches: Felsenburg, Mikhailoffka, Novo, Alexandroffka, Kuhn.
Rastatt, parish church S, 2450

Hospodářská a kulturní studia - https://www.hks.re/wiki/
Munich, parish church S, 1737 \ Kherson, parish church S, 2245 \ Branch: Zaredaroffka.
Monastery village, parish church S, 1237
Kisetjeffka, stone prayer house. 1440

Odessa deanery

Odessa, parish church of the Assumption of Mary S, 14986
Branch in honor of St. Peter.
Chapel in the convent of Franciscan nuns, in the French retirement home. Odessa, parish church of St. Clement. 17773
Mannheim, parish church of S, 2459
Branches: Georgiental, Johannestal
Alsace. Parish church S, 2325
Jeremejeffka, branch church S \ Branch: Schemiott.
Kleinliebental, parish church S, 2664 \ Chapel in the cemetery.
Josephstal, parish church S, 1162
Chapel.
Mariental, parish church S, 950 \ Franzfeld, parish church S, 672 \ Chapel in honor of the Mother of God.
Kandel, parish church p, 2741 \ Chapel in the churchyard.
Selz, parish church S, 2537 \ Baden, parish church S, 1842 \ Chapel on the churchyard.
Strasbourg, parish church S, 3632
Branches: Stephanoffka, Andrjaschoffka, Miroljuboffka, Marjanoffka.
Prayer house S. Severinoffka, parish church S, 1112
Ponyatoffka, prayer house S, 1500
Branches: Kozhary, Biziljeffka, Simionoffka.
Elizabethgrad, parish church S, 2286 \ Tyraspol, prayer house in a rented building. 100

Piatigorsk deanery

Piatigorsk, parish church S, 1738 \ Timir-Chan-Shura, military parish church S, 360 \ Vladikavkaz, parish church S, 550
Grozny, prayer house S, 5800 \ Mosdok, parish church S, 338 \ Stavropol, Church S, 1800
Ekaterinodar, Parish church S, 2500
Rowerosyyisk, prayer house S, 3580
Rozhdestvenskoye, church H, 2638
Semionofka, church H, 2700 \ Nikolaevka, church S, 500

Tbilisi deanery

Tbilisi, parish church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. 3302
Tbilisi, parish church of St. Peter and Paul. 7000
Chapel on the churchyard of Kukujeff. \ Chapel on the second churchyard. \ Manglis, parish church S, 13600 \ Gory, parish church S, 495
Chapel in the village Betlemei.
Kutais, parish church S, 2087
Chapel in the churchyard.
Achalzyck, prayer house S, 173
Attachment

The Russian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite

The Catholic Church of the Latin rite in Russia was always a church of non-Russians: Poles, Lithuanians, Latgarians, Germans, etc. But nevertheless there were always conversions of Russians to the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, in our century there was an attempt to create a Russian Catholic Church of the Slavonic-Byzantine rite. Among the converts in the 19th century are: several members of the family of Prince Galitzin, Prince Gagarin and Count Martinov, ctie became Jesuits, and a relative of the emperor, Princess Narishkin.

Until the 1905 Revolution, conversion from the Russian Orthodox Church to another denomination was forbidden in tsarist Russia. It was not until Tsar Nicholas II proclaimed a freedom of confession, albeit limited, in his October Manifesto that a Russian Catholic community was formed. It emerged in St. Petersburg, where Alexei Serchaninov, a Russian priest who had become Catholic, celebrated in the Old Church Slavonic rite in a private house on Polosov Street.

In 1909, a priest of the Old Believers, Susalev, asked to be accepted into the Catholic Church. Pope Pius X decided that his ordination to the priesthood should be considered valid. Susalev went to the capital, where he sent a telegram of greetings to the tsar on Easter 1909. The court minister's reply now referred to the congregation as that of the „Old Believers in communion with the Holy See.“ It was not until 1917, after the fall of the Tsar, that a Russian Catholic Exarchate could be established, headed by Leonid Feodorov. He had left the Orthodox theological academy in St. Petersburg and had been received into the Catholic Church in Lviv by Metropolitan Andrew Sheptitsky. He then studied in Rome and Fribourg, Switzerland, remained abroad after his ordination in 1911, and only returned to Russia in 1914, where he was arrested and exiled to Siberia.

After the February Revolution of 1917, the Ukrainian Metropolitan of Lviv established a Russian exarchate, which Pope Benedict XV later confirmed. Two parishes were created in Petersburg and Moscow, which did not want to create converts, but advocated the union of the Orthodox with the Catholic Church. During a visit to Belarus in June 1922, there seemed to be hopes of restoring the union with Rome liquidated in Polotsk in 1839. But the wave of terror and persecution since summer 1922 destroyed everything. In the priestly trial of 1923 the exarch received ten years in prison. Released after three years, he went to Belarus, was arrested again and suffered in prisons and camps on the Solovki Islands in the White Sea and in Vyatka, where he died in 1935.

A similar fate was suffered by Catherine Abrikosov, a Russian who founded a Russian Catholic convent for women of the Dominican Tertiaries shortly before the October Revolution. She was joined by various educated Russian women. They too were arrested in 1923 and convicted of „belonging to an illegal organization.“ Mother Catherine died in Butyrka prison in 1936.

It was only in the wake of perestroika that Russians who had converted to the Catholic Church were again able to enter the Riga seminary.
The Armenian Rite Catholics in the Soviet Union

Among Armenian Christians living today in the Soviet Union and around the world, there have been Catholics for centuries who were allowed to keep their own rite when they joined Rome. At times in the Middle Ages, all Armenians were united with Rome.

In old Russia, before the First World War, there were 46 Armenian Catholic parishes in the diocese of Tiraspol with 39 churches, 38 priests and 30000 souls. Moreover, in the Austrian Lviv since 1635, besides the Latin (Polish) and Greek Catholic (Ukrainian) archbishoprics, there was a Catholic archbishopric of the Armenian rite with a cathedral chapter. It had eight parishes in Galicia and two in Bukovina, served by 27 priests.

When Lviv became Polish after World War I, Catholic archbishops continued to reside in the city. After the occupation by the Bote Army, however, the mostly Polonized Catholic Armenians were expelled. Today they have their own services in the Armenian rite in Gdansk and Warsaw.

For the Catholic Armenians in Russia (or since 1922 in the Soviet Union) after the October Revolution a separate „Apostolic Administration for the Faithful of the Armenian Rite“ was established. In 1923 it counted over 60000 believers with 47 priests, 45 churches and 15 chapels. Today, officially, nothing of this remains. After the Second World War, when the Russian and Georgian Orthodox were also allowed to elect a patriarch or catholicos like the Armenians, the newly elected catholicos Kevork VI was no friend of ecumenism. In his first public statement, he praised the war efforts of all churches in the fight against Hitler, saying of the Catholic Church, „But it is painful to know that one Christian church did not join our blessed cause. More than that, that church supported the Nazi enemies of our Lord.“

Since the visit of Catholicos Vazgen I.to Rome in 1970, the climate has happily improved, but there is as yet no regulated pastoral care for uniate Catholics of the Armenian rite. The same applies to the few Chaldeans, i.e. Catholics of the East Syriac rite. In the diocese of Tiraspol, they had their own parish in the governorate of Yerevan. These few hundred faithful increased to several thousand souls due to refugees from Turkey and Persia during the First World War. In Tbilisi, their New Aramaic language is also included in worship.

Unsere task - what can we do?

1. the demands of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev for „glass-post“ have led to many an open discussion in the Soviet Union about the past and have often confirmed what Aid to the Church in Need/Eastern Priests noted in its information work years ago: The discrimination of believers as 2nd class citizens has even been admitted by the Soviet Minister of Religion Konstantin Kharchev. In November 1988, in his story „The Samaritan Woman“ published in the Moscow magazine „Ogonyok“, the Maida-Wian writer Jon Drufa was able to give a figure of 1500 closed churches and 70 destroyed monasteries for Moldova alone.

Therefore, we must continue to inform objectively and not forget, with all the positive things that are happening in the USSR today, how far this country still is from true religious freedom and how many wrongs have not yet been righted.
2) The last few years have brought some facilitation of travel to the Soviet Union, but most Western tourists have sought „only“ to meet the Orthodox Church.

with the Orthodox Church. The opening also of the Baltic States and Central Asia to tourism today enables us also to have visiting contacts with Catholic parishes, with priests, seminarians and lay people. This must be done carefully and sensitively, since the Catholic faithful of the Soviet Union have been cut off from the ecclesiastical and theological development of the universal Church for more than half a century, in some cases even since 1917. The conciliar renewal of Vatican II could only be tackled on an extremely modest scale. The Catholic Church in the Soviet Union is not a church of learned theologians and debating ecclesiastical associations and federations, but a praying community of faithful laity and priests.

3) the events of „Perestroika“ have opened new possibilities for us to help the Soviet Union. Since 1988 it has been possible to send religious literature. Our work finances the printing, translation and new editions of religious literature in various languages of the Soviet Union. We support seminaries, bishops, priests, many parishes and a radio program in Russian. Help us with these projects and build a spiritual bridge to our brothers and sisters in faith in the Soviet Union.

Pope appoints two archbishops for Lithuania

Pope John Paul II has appointed two archbishops and two apostolic administrators for Lithuania. Archbishop of Kaunas became Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevicius, the previous Apostolic Administrator of the Kaisiadorys Diocese, on Friday, March 10, after many years of negotiations between the Holy See and Soviet authorities. As archbishop of Vilnius, the pope appointed Julijonas Steponavicius, who had been released from exile only a few months earlier. Since World War II, the two archbishoprics in Lithuania had not been properly staffed. Juozas Preifltas was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Panevezys diocese. Juozas Zemaitis was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Vilkavishis diocese, succeeding Bishop Liudas Povilonis

Vatican City, March 12, 1989 (KNA)
positive development for the Roman Catholic Church in the Soviet Union continued, although it is not possible to foresee whether the policy of perestroika will be successful in view of the national and economic problems of the giant empire and whether true religious freedom will one day be achieved. In the area of religious policy, too, there are repeated stagnations and setbacks. Some reports turn out to be false.

In particular, the hope that a new religion law will soon be passed to replace those provisions cited on pages 22 and 23 of this book has not yet materialized. It is also significant that the Minister of Religion, Konstantin Kharchev, was replaced under pressure from the Orthodox Church. Because of the delay in adopting a new religion law at the Union level, Lithuania struck out on its own path and adopted its own religion law for that republic in November 1989.

**Lithuania**

The broadcast of the 1989 Christmas Mass from Vilnius Cathedral live in Lithuania and to numerous countries in Western Europe and overseas documented the decisive steps the Lithuanian Church was able to take toward greater freedom. A decisive contribution to this was made by the fact that in the course of Lithuania's independence, the State Church Office of the Republic was detached from Moscow and placed directly under the authority of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers. It was not until the end of 1988 that the Apostolic Administrator of Vilnius, Julijonas Stepanovicius, returned to his episcopal city from his exile in Zagare after 23 years. In Vilnius, the cathedral, previously used as a painting gallery, was returned to the Church, as was the Casimir Church, which until then had been an atheistic museum. Among the returns of 26 other profaned places of worship are the Church of Mary Queen of Peace in Memel (previously used as a concert hall) and the Church of the Resurrection in Kaunas (previously a radio factory). In addition, in 1989 permission was granted for the establishment of 23 new Catholic parishes and the construction of 18 new churches, mostly to be built in new development areas of large cities. The archdioceses of Kaunas and Vilnius received archbishops for the first time since World War II (see p. 143), although Vilnius remains outside the Lithuanian ecclesiastical province (with the metropolitan see of Kaunas). (As is well known, the Vatican has not yet settled the question of dioceses in the Polish eastern territories lost to the Soviet Union after World War II.)

All priests previously trained secretly in underground seminaries (p. 41) are now legally allowed to engage in pastoral ministry. The priest Sigitas Tamkevicius, who was released from several years of imprisonment only on November 1, 1988, became a spiritual director at the seminary in Kaunas. There are no longer any state restrictions for this seminary since the Lithuanian bishops clearly expressed in 1988 that they themselves would decide on admission without asking the state authorities.

However, since there was not enough space in the seminary in Kaunas for the more than 160 theologians, a second seminary was opened in Telšiai in September 1989. This had become urgently necessary because of more than forty years of persecution and restrictions on priestly education in Lithuania, leaving 170 parishes unfilled. In addition, more than a quarter of the clergy are over 75 years old.

With other Catholic activities tolerated by the Lithuanian government, Lithuania is far ahead of all
other Catholics in the Soviet Union. For example, a Catholic Women's League has been established and charitable activities have begun in parishes. A Catholic hospital is planned. The Catholic Scouts reconstituted themselves in 1989. Negotiations during the summer of 1989 between the bishops and the Ministry of Education resulted in another decisive breakthrough: the Lithuanian government renounced the monopoly on the teaching of atheism in schools and, at the end of the year, for the first time again allowed religious education in Lithuanian schools. In a joint declaration signed by Lithuanian Minister of Education Henrikas Zabulis and Chairman of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevicius, religious education was regulated thus:

1. religion shall be given to pupils upon the request of parents or guardians who present themselves to the head of the parish in this regard.

2. the head of the municipality shall establish parochial schools for religious education, which shall be registered by the municipal or regional departments of the Ministry of Education according to the designated guidelines.

3. the authorities of the Ministry of Education shall provide the parochial schools with rooms for religious instruction, as requested by parents, in the elementary schools and premises in other schools which shall provide comfortable conditions for the teaching of religious education.

4. the schools in whose premises the parochial school is established shall provide the premises free of charge.

5. the teachers of religion shall be appointed by the Episcopal Conference, which shall give to each one an appropriate mandate.

(6) The Bishops' Conference shall decide with official authority on the content of religious education and on questions of personnel. It informs the Ministry of Education of its decisions.

According to the cardinal, the Church in Lithuania has thus emerged „from the state of spiritual exile and isolation from the people.“ Furthermore, chapels for faithful patients are to be established in all hospitals. Lithuanian television now also regularly offers a religious program. From Austria, 150,000 Lithuanian New Testaments could be imported, as well as almost 10,000 theological books for the two seminaries in Kaunas and Telsiai. A church newspaper can be published monthly with a circulation of 100000 copies.

**Latvia**

It was noted with great joy in this Baltic country that the incapacitated bishop Kasimirs Dulhinskis (see p. 70), who was convicted in 1940, was „habilitated.“ The 1958 sentence against Cardinal Julijana Vajvods, born in 1895, was also annulled. The Supreme Court of Latvia decided in June 1989 to return also all confiscated belongings of the chief shepherd of the diocese. The cardinal, now 94 years old, still participated in the pilgrimage to Aglona on the Feast of the Assumption, where 100,000 pilgrims gathered. 40 priests heard confessions there and celebrated the festive service with the cardinal and the auxiliary bishops Janis Cakuls and Vilhelms Nukā. For the first time in Preili County, where Aglona is located, August 15 was approved by the authorities as a non-working holiday. In addition to Latvian and Latgalian prayers and songs, Russian, Polish and Belarusian texts were also heard in Aglona, as the pilgrims came from other republics of the Soviet Union besides Latvia. For the first time since the
Soviet occupation, a religious magazine could be published in Latvia: Katolu Dzeive (Catholic Life). With a circulation of 50,000 copies, it appeared six times a year and, with its number 171, deliberately took up where the church newspaper of the same name had left off, banned in 1940 and already published from 1926 to 1940. The articles are in Latvian and Latgalian.

At the end of 1989108 alumni were studying at the Priest Seminary in Riga. They come from the following republics: Latvia 22, Ukraine 49, Belarus 25, Kazakhstan 7, from the R8F8R two and one each from Tajikistan, Estonia and Moldova.

In terms of nationality, there are 20 Latvians, 48 Poles, 19 Ukrainians, eight Germans, seven Belarusians, two Russians, two Hungarians and one each Lithuanian and Estonian. The composition of the courses is as follows:

1st year: 30
2nd year: 26
3rd year: 18
4th year: 13
5th year: 12
Internship year: 9

The nine seminarians of the internship year received priestly ordination on May 28, 1980. There were three Poles, two Germans, two Latvians, one Estonian and one Ukrainian.

About the religious life of some Latvian parishes, the new church newspaper „Katolu dzeive“ has published some detailed dataThus, in St. Mary's parish in Dünaburg in 1988, there were a total of 405 baptisms, 181 funerals and 110 marriages. 109 children went to the first communion. The total number of communions was almost 70000. In Riga, in the parish of St. Francis, there were 265 baptisms, 44 marriages and 183 ecclesiastical funerals. First Holy Communion was received by 75 children. A total of 55500 communions were distributed. In the parish of Mary Magdalene in the Latvian capital, 290 baptisms were administered and 65 marriages took place Here there were 177 first communions.

A bishop in Belarus

The most significant event for the Church outside the Baltics was the appointment of a bishop in Belarus, which, according to the Vatican, took place with the approval of Soviet authorities. Born in 1946, the new bishop, Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, studied in Kaunas and was previously a parish priest in Grodno. He holds the title of Apostolic Administrator of Minsk, whose last chief shepherd was the Confessor Bishop Boleslav Sloskans. After his arrest in 1927, the archbishopric was deserted. As part of Kondrusiewicz's appointment, a figure of two million Catholics in Belarus was also mentioned in Rome. The new administrator expressed hope of opening a seminary in Minsk soon. He expects at least 80 candidates for the seminary. Currently, 25 theologians from Belarus are studying in Riga. The clergy in Belarus is still very outdated. For example, the six priests who serve 13 parishes in the Brest area range in age from 77 to 88.
Despite all the joy of Belarusian Catholics over the appointment of Bishop Kondrusiewicz, there were also voices of regret that the bishop is a Pole, since Poles are only a minority among Catholics. So far, there is almost no Belarusian religious literature. While the Catholics are supplied with Polish literature from Poland, the Orthodox Church spreads the Russian language. With all due respect to the Polish minority in Belarus, it will be an important task to represent Belarusian legitimate national interests in pastoral care, which the twelve Latvian and four Lithuanian priests in Belarus are thankfully doing.

In the diaspora of the Soviet Union, in Russia proper, the RSFSR, in Moscow and Leningrad the conditions of the Catholic communities there are unfortunately almost unchanged. In the megacities, the two aged Lithuanian priests continue to take care of the local churches. The Christmas Mass of the 85-year-old priest in Moscow in 1989 was attended by numerous members of foreign embassies. The houses of worship in Leningrad taken away from the congregations in the 1920s, such as St. Catherine's Church on the Nevsky Prospect, continue to be warehouses and depots. The same is true in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, where Pastor Janis Krapans continues to fight for the return of the two profaned large churches in the city center. In contrast, progress is being made in building up the parish in Saratov on the Volga. Here the German priest Josef Wert is allowed to build a church again in the old episcopal town (see p. 85), since many Volga German Catholics are counting on the re-establishment of the Autonomous Republic of Volga Germans and are already returning from deportation.

A milestone for the re-establishment of Catholic orders could be the branches of the Sisters of Mother Theresa in Leninakan, Tbilisi and Moscow. In Tbilisi, two chaplains assist the Polish parish priest there. The new climate of glasnost also benefited many Roman Catholic parishes with the opening of borders and new opportunities to visit. A number of priests - also from Central Asia - were able to travel to the West to inform about their situation and ask for help. Conversely, Western groups were also able to visit numerous parishes throughout the Soviet Union.

Rudolf Grulich
February 1990

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