

On 19 March 2012, Lithuania will mark the 40th anniversary of the launch of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

Even under the Stalinist totalitarianism, the Catholic Church in Lithuania remained a relatively independent institution directly subordinate to the Holy See rather than the Communist Party. Therefore, the regime endeavoured to suppress and control any direct relations between the leaders of the Church in Lithuania and Vatican in every possible way. Besides, Vatican never recognised the incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR. Although the religious representatives in Lithuania were persecuted and the rights of the Church were violated, the activities of the Church were not discontinued and always remained legal. The Soviet regime tried, by all means possible, to use the social influence of the Church for its own purposes, but the efforts of the occupiers never reached their goal. In the post-war period, the leaders of the Catholic Church in Lithuania refrained from publicly declaring their support to the armed resistance against the Soviet regime; however, many priests provided both material and spiritual support to the fighters. The religious leaders resisted any pressures to encourage the partisans to discontinue the armed resistance. As a result, archbishops of the Catholic Church in Lithuania Rev. Mečislovas Reinys and Rev. Teofilius Matulionis and bishop Pranas Ramanauskas were imprisoned, Rev. Vincentas Borisevičius received capital punishment and was killed to death, and many other priests were either deported or imprisoned.

The repressions did not suppress the efforts of the Church to perform its pastoral duty and fight for the rights of the believers. Petitions concerning violations of the religious rights as well as regarding persecutions for catechisation of children and for involvement of youth into religious activities were being signed and distributed throughout the country. However, it was only after the underground press, i.e. the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* appeared, that the information on this became available to everyone both in Lithuania and worldwide.

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania was a publication that made the Lithuanian cause for freedom famous. The KGB failed to silence the publication that was eroding the myth maintained by the Soviet propaganda concerning the alleged humanity of the Communist regime and the ostensible freedom of spiritual life and liberty of religion in the Soviet Union. The *Chronicle* encouraged believers in the occupied Lithuania to fight for the freedom of religion and conscience, disciplined the ones who were likely to collaborate with the Soviet regime, and fostered the expression of national pride. In the period of 1972–1989, the *Chronicle* documented and publicly announced information regarding human rights violations, stifling of Church activities, and persecution of believers. This voice, supported by the Russian dissidents, managed to break through the Berlin wall and proclaim to the world that the Lithuanian nation was oppressed yet alive and that the Church was being persecuted but believed in resurrection. The publishing of the *Chronicle* in Lithuania and in the West and its distribution in the free countries worldwide united the people on the two sides of the iron curtain who cherished the concepts of *God* and *Homeland*. The KGB persecutions, arrests, labour camps, and exile never won over profound creed and commitment to homeland and its freedom. A total of 81 issue of the *Chronicle* came out in print. In the West, the *Chronicle* was issued in English, Italian, Spanish, and German.

We see the role of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* during the occupation not as a temporary episode in the nation's history featuring thousands of examples of persecution and resistance, but as a permanent beacon of freedom that encouraged commitment to freedom, warned against compromise with conscience, fostered the feelings of national pride, and taught to cherish the Christian heritage.

The Commemorative Conference organised at the Seimas will feature presentations and sharing of memories by the editors, publishers, distributors, and supporters of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. Mr Sergei Kovalev, Mr Alexander Lavut, Ms Liudmila Boicova, and Ms Sima Mostinskaja, supporters and distributors of the *Chronicle* from Russia, will also take part in the Conference. The event will cover the difficulties relating to the publishing, distribution, editing, and collection of information for the *Chronicle*, the troubles faced while disseminating the edition in Lithuania and abroad and transferring it to the West, as well as the persecutions by the KGB. The Conference will also address the movement of the Friends of the Eucharist, preservation of the materials for the future generations, and the importance of dissemination of the information on the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.



Commemorative Conference

Truth as the Pathway to Freedom. *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* in the period of 1972-1988

Friday, 16 March 2012
March 11 Hall of the Seimas

The Commemorative Conference is dedicated to:
40th Anniversary of the Publication of the Chronicle
of the Catholic Church in Lithuania

The Commemorative Conference starts at 10 a.m. on 16 March 2012.

Venue: March 11 Hall, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
(Gedimino Ave. 53, Vilnius)

Nature of the Commemorative Conference: a political, scientific,
and commemorative event.

Participating countries: Lithuania, Russia.

Conference participants:

Editors, publishers, distributors, and supporters of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, academic community, NGOs, communities, history teachers, students, pupils, journalists, and foreign diplomats.

PROGRAMME

Session 1

10.00-11.50

Chairmen: Mr *Arvydas Anušauskas*, Chairman of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence, and Mr *Vidmantas Povilionis*, Signatory to the Act of Independence

10.00-10.10

Welcome address by Mrs *Irena Degutienė*, Speaker of the Seimas

10.10-10.30

Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania: a Form of Unarmed Resistance in 1972-1989. H. E. Archbishop *Sigitas Tamkevičius*, editor and publisher of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

10.30-10.50

A Word of Truth in a World of Lies
Mr *Petras Plumpa*, publisher and distributor of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

10.50-11.10

The Power of the Weak Rests in the Truth. The KGB Fiasco in Suppressing the Truth
Ms *Birutė Burauskaitė*, Director, Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania

11.10-11.30

Our Allies: Support Offered by Dissident Scientists in Moscow to the Distribution of the *Chronicle* in the West
Mr *Arimantas Raškinis*, former MP, distributor of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

11.30-11.50

We Were Sitting in One Boat
Mr *Alexander Lavut*, Russian dissident, distributor of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

11.50-12.30

Coffee Break

12.30-13.10

Presentation of books in the Seimas Exhibition Gallery
Memoirs by H. E. *Sigitas Tamkevičius* about the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* and a book *Terror in 1940-1958* by *Arvydas Anušauskas*, Chairman of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence

Session 2

13.10-16.00

Chairmen: Mr *Algis Kašėta*, MP, and Assoc. Prof. *Nerijus Šepetys*, Faculty of History, Vilnius University, editor of the magazine *Naujasis Židinys*

13.10-13.30

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania in the Final Stage of the Soviet Era
H. E. Archbishop *Jonas Boruta*, editor and publisher of the *Chronicle*

13.30-13.50

Telling the Truth as the Most Dangerous Weapon against the Soviet Regime
Mr *Sergei Kovalev*, Freedom Prize winner, distributor of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, Russian dissident, human rights defender

13.50-14.10

God Protected Us
Sister *Gerarda Elena Šuliauskaitė*, editor and distributor of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*

14.10-14.30

Underground Press and Friends of the Eucharist
Mr *Edvardas Šiugžda*, editor of the newspaper *XXI Amžius*

14.30-14.50

Dissemination of the *Chronicle* in Lithuania
Ms *Inga Arlauskaitė*, Postgraduate Student, Vilnius University

14.50-15.10

The Importance of Historical Memory and its Transfer to Future Generations
Ms *Angonita Rupšytė*, Head of the Unit for History and Commemoration of Parliamentarianism, Communications Department, Office of the Seimas; *Historic Heritage of Lithuanian Statehood in an Electronic Space* Project Manager

15.10-15.30

Unarmed Anti-Soviet Resistance in Lithuania: Guidelines for the Preservation and Transfer of Historical Memory
Ms *Monika Kareniauskaitė*, Senior Historian at the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania

15.30-16.00

Discussion

ORGANISERS OF THE COMMEMORATIVE CONFERENCE:



Seimas of
the Republic
of Lithuania



Genocide
and Resistance
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