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EARLIEST ECUMENICAL ACTIVITIES IN  
LITHUANIA INVOLVING THE ROMAN CATHOLIC,  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX, AND LUTHERAN  
CHURCHES AND SOVIET REACTIONS

The decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which came out of the deliberations of the participants in the Second Vatican Council, called for an increasing involvement in ecumenical activities by Roman Catholic bishops around the world. It opened the door for participation in joint activities along with theological discussions between theologians and churchmen of major Christian groups. At the same time, the Moscow Patriarchate announced a new initiative concerning relationships with other major Christian Confessions. On the basis of these pronouncements ecumenical activities began in Lithuania during a period when all the Churches were being closely watched and in so far as possible supervised by the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers in Moscow and its commissioner in Vilnius.

The ecumenical services which were held involved mainly Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and Lutheran clergy. These services received much publicity in church calendars at that time, but little has been written concerning the reaction to these ecumenical initiatives by the communist government.

This article seeks to provide a firsthand picture of ecumenical activities involving these three Churches in the 1960's and 1970's and the reactions of the Commissioner of Religious Affairs to them. The circumstances which called forth these ecumenical observances and the degree of involvement by higher Church officials are examined. Note is taken also of the reports of the commissioner to Moscow and his evaluation of the phenomenon of ecumenism and the possible dangers

inherent in it, as well as his comments concerning the useful purposes to which ecumenical activities could be put by communist authorities. The study is based chiefly upon archival documents, although church calendars and the personal correspondence of the clergy have also been valuable resources.

#### SIGNIFICANT PROTESTANT ECUMENICAL INITIATIVES

In the 1960's new interest arose concerning the mutual relationships between churches which were theologically and liturgically isolated from each other. This new interest could be placed under the general heading: ecumenism.

The ecumenical movement had long been a part of the Protestant scene. It was a major theme of the International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh 1890 and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 which had been born by an interest in creating a united Protestant Church in the United States. The Life and Work and Faith and Order movements also in their 1937 conferences voted to merge into a World Council of Churches (WCC), which was to meet first in Utrecht in 1938. World War II interrupted further activity for almost a decade, and it was not until 1948 that 147 churches representing 44 countries participated in the completion of the organization of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> The old International Missionary Council continued to function as a separate organization. Also maintaining their separate existence while at the same time maintaining close ties with the WCC were the World Alliance of The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).

During this period the Lutheran Church in Lithuania, along with all other Churches in the Eastern Block, were behind an "iron curtain" which effectively isolated them from almost all contact, including ecclesiastical, with the West. The only close relationship with another churches which the Lithuanian Lutherans were able to maintain were

<sup>1</sup> *Churches & Europe: a Reader*, 2002, p. 14.

with sister Lutheran Churches in Latvia and Estonia and the Reformed Church in Lithuania. Festal events of the Lithuanian Lutherans would usually include official representatives from these Churches.

A friendly, but somewhat more distant, relationship was maintained with the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in Lithuania. Even before the World War II both Churches had welcomed each others parish congregations to make use of their facilities when necessary. In Tauragė and Žeimelis the Lutheran congregations permitted congregations of the Russian Orthodox Church to use their buildings for divine services, and in Pasvalys and Kaunas the Lutherans had been permitted to make use of Russian Orthodox churches and chapels. In 1941 the communist government appropriated for its own use the property of the Kaunas evangelical Lutheran parish and would not permit the congregation to hold divine services there any longer. In April consistory chairman Erikas Leijeris wrote to the Eparchial Council of the Russian Orthodox Church reminding it of the good relations which had long since existed between the Russian and Lutheran Churches in Lithuania and asking that the Kaunas Lutheran congregation be permitted to hold divine service one or two times a month in the Russian Orthodox Church until a permanent home for the congregation could be secured.<sup>2</sup> Both Churches continued to welcome each others parish congregations to share their facilities during the World War II. It is likely that during the war the Russian Orthodox celebrated their liturgy in Lutheran churches in the Šiauliai-Mažeikiai region.<sup>3</sup> In 1958 the Orthodox parish in Klaipėda permitted the Lutherans to use their church building.<sup>4</sup> This was the old Lutheran cemetery chapel which had been given to the

<sup>2</sup> April 30, 1941 letter of Erikas Leijeris to the Eparchial Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. Vyskupo Jono Kalvano archyvas (The Document Collection in the Library of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, Sr., – henceforth JKA), Gauti raštai 1941–1944 (unpaged).

<sup>3</sup> March 4, 1944 letter of Erikas Leijeris to Gustavas Rauskinas to open Lutheran churches for use by Russian Orthodox Congregations in need of a place to worship, Alkiškių liuteronų parapijos archyvas (Records of the Lutheran Parish Church of Alkiškiai, henceforth – ALPA), Lietuvos Ev. – lut. Baznīcas Konsistorijas raksti par 1933. gadu. 1941–1944 g. (unpaged).

<sup>4</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 217, 7.

Russian Orthodox by the communist government. These and similar instances might better be called examples of ecumenical hospitality rather than examples of ecumenical activity.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ATTITUDE TOWARDS ECUMENISM  
BY THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE MOSCOW  
PATRIARCHATE

Protestant notions of ecumenism which had led to the creation of the WCC were primarily, but not exclusively, concerned with inter-church collaboration in practical matters. The Roman Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate viewed ecumenism as a theological and ecclesiological problem and looked askance at the WCC. The Vatican regarded the Roman Catholic Church as the one, true, visible body of Christ on earth and insisted that primary emphasis must be put on the reunion of Churches under the Roman Pontiff. The Moscow Patriarchate also was not much interested in anything that had to do with the WCC. In general terms, it shared Stalin's anti-Western attitudes and regarded the WCC as a Western Protestant phenomenon irrelevant to them. When it was invited to join the WCC in 1948 the Moscow Patriarchate was emphatic in its statement that it was not interested. With the issuance of an October 4, 1958 Communist Party Central Committee directive *Shortcomings of the Scientific Atheist Propaganda*, calling for stronger control over the Churches, the Russian Orthodox Church then began to consider its need for contacts with Churches in the West. They had now lost their privileged position and found themselves isolated and persecuted. Metropolitan Nikolaj, head of the Church's foreign relations' department, was pressured by the Soviet government to resign in 1960. He was replaced by Bishop Nikodem who had a somewhat wider vision of the Church and its relations. It was his position that the Church must seek more contacts with Churches outside the Soviet Bloc.<sup>5</sup> In response to his initiatives the meeting of

<sup>5</sup> М. В. Шкаровский, *Русская Православная Церковь при Сталине и Хрущеве*, Москва, 2005, p. 373-374.

the Holy Synod on March 30, 1961 resolved to seek entrance into the WCC. Its stated purpose was to teach western Christians about Eastern Orthodoxy and establish mutual bonds of love and peace among the Churches. On April 11, 1961 Patriarch Aleksij wrote to the WCC stating that the Russian Church was in full agreement with the constitution of WCC and was thereby applying for membership. He further stated that the Russian Church believed fervently in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and regarded itself as an integral part of it. It had always in its prayers interceded for all the holy Churches of God and for the unity of all. It might be asked whether this statement represented something of a shift in the understanding of the Ektania Prayer in which this phrase was found, since traditionally it had been understood that the Prayer referred to autocephalic Orthodox Churches and not other confessions or so-called “church bodies.” The Communist Party gave permission because it believed it could achieve some propaganda advantage by doing so. Here, they claimed, was clear proof of the freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it would indicate that the Church’s representatives could travel freely to Church meetings outside the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> It goes without saying that were anything to be said in WCC gatherings about religious oppression or persecution in the Soviet Union, the delegates from Russia would immediately protest and contradict these statements.

At the same time the announcement of the coming convocation of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council also provoked interest among the Russian Orthodox. It was evident that the Roman Catholic Church was beginning to redefine its ecumenical perspective. It was not doing so from any sense of isolation, but as John XXIII stated it was “to open up the windows and let in some fresh air”. In May 1961 Augustin Cardinal Bea, Vatican Secretary of State, announced that the Council would welcome observers from other Churches, including representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. They

<sup>6</sup> *Русская Православная Церковь в советское время (1917–1991): Составитель Герд Штриккер. Книга 2, Москва, 1995, р. 27-28; Церковная жизнь, 1961, по. 5-7, р. 95-96.*

would not offer any official invitations, but it should be known that any official observers sent by the Patriarch would receive a warm welcome.<sup>7</sup> For his part Patriarch Aleksij responded to the Vatican that he would be pleased to send observers. It was not until October 10, the day before the official opening of the Council, that the Central Committee of the Communist Party gave the necessary permissions.

The Decree on Ecumenism formulated in the Council on November 21, 1964 declared that the Roman Catholic Church envisioned the eventual unity in one earthly Church of all people baptized into Christ. The lengthy *Unitatis Redintegratio* did not speak concerning political, social, economic, geographic, or ideological factors but regarded Christian unity as an outward expression of the Oneness of the Church. The lack of it, according to this document, represented a contradiction of the will of Christ and was a significant cause for the failure of preaching to reach its goal of creating faith. While recognizing that dissensions, schisms, and heresies resulted for various reasons, the three most common are the failure to adhere to apostolic doctrine, differences in discipline, and disagreements concerning the outward structure of the Church on earth. According to the document it is precisely these differences which had to be prayerfully addressed without rancor, for there can be no true ecumenism where these issues are not laid open and thoroughly discussed by those who take differing positions. *Unitatis Redintegratio* also stated that from the side of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as from the side of those with whom it is in dialogue, there must be a realization that all involved stand together under the grace of God given in Holy Baptism. The realization of this important common character must not, however, lead anyone to gloss over the differences which still need to be resolved. Again from the Roman Catholic side the faith must be presented accurately but in a manner which is as non-prejudicial as possible. In short, there can be no true ecumenism where in matters of doctrine the disputing sides simply agree to disagree without any further attempt to reconcile those differences and come to the truth. Although the Churches stand together on many issues facing humanity, the unity

<sup>7</sup> Журнал Московской Патриархии, 1961, no. 5, Non possumus! (unsigned).

to be sought is not simply the development of common statements and programs addressing such issues. The document also opens the possibility of common prayer and some degree of common worship in appropriate settings and approvals.<sup>8</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* has proven to be of immense significance in forswearing inter-church relationships.

No Lithuanian Roman Catholic bishop attended the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Representing them were the diocesan administrators who brought back from Rome a full report of the decrees and constitution of the Council. The Council had called for the establishment of ecumenical relations with other Christians, and the administrators made it clear that Rome expected this to be done.

The Church of Rome was not alone in implementing programs to foster improved relationships with other Churches within the borders of the Soviet Union. On July 16, 1965 the *Журнал Московской Патриархии* (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*) announced that it was forthwith inviting the Baltic Churches to enter into ecumenical relations with the Patriarchate.<sup>9</sup> The fruit of this announcement was the development of improved relations between the Russian Orthodox and Evangelical Lutheran Churches and as the result of *Unitatis Redintegratio* the Roman Catholic Church also entered into close relations with the Orthodox and Lutherans.

#### LUTHERAN INITIATIVES IN THE FIRST ECUMENICAL CELEBRATIONS

The first ecumenical service in the Baltic States in which all three confessions were represented was celebrated on December 5, 1965, the Second Sunday in Advent, in the Evangelical Lutheran church in Šilutė. The occasion was the 80th birthday of consistory chairman Pastor Vilius Burkevičius. Lutherans and Orthodox had earlier participated in some

<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Walter Kasper, *Searching for Christian Unity*, New York, 2007, p. 219-241.

<sup>9</sup> Алексей I, Патриарх Московский и всея Руси, "Послание архипастырям, клиру и пастве Эстонской, Литовской и Латвийской епархий Московского Патриархата", *Журнал Московской Патриархии*, 1965, no. 8, p. 1-2.

joint ecumenical services but at Šilutė Roman Catholic representatives were for the first time present. Participating in the service were the Chairman Burkevičius, Archbishop Gustavs Tūrs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, Archbishop Jaan Kiivit, Sr., of the Lutheran Church of Estonia, Roman Catholic Prelate Rapolas Kuodis of Žemaičių Naumiestis, Archpriest Joan Semionov of the Lithuanian Russian Orthodox Church, and Senior Pastor Povilas Jašinskas of the Lithuanian Reformed Church. Since that day joint services had become a common occurrence in Lithuania.<sup>10</sup>

On February 24, 1966 Pastors Jonas Kalvanas, Jonas Armonaitis, Gustavas Rauskinas, and Mikas Preikšaitis traveled to Tallinn, Estonia, to participate in a service honoring Archbishop Jaan Kiivit, Sr., on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Also participating in the service were Archbishop Tūrs of Latvia, and Archbishop Aleksij, Moscow Patriarchate Bishop of Estonia and Administrator of the Holy Synod (later Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church). Also participating was Rev. I. Ivanov, head of the all-Union Baptist Union, along with Estonian senior pastors and consistory members.<sup>11</sup>

The Roman Catholic priest in Šilutė organized an ecumenical service in his church as a follow up to the Lutheran service. It was planned that the service would be held on September 18, 1966. Unfortunately the service was never held. Pastor Kalvanas explained in his September 27-29, 1966 meetings in Riga with representatives of the LWF that the Šilutė executive committee had forbidden the holding of the service. He noted that in their meeting the Latvian commissioner for religious affairs had stated that there must have been an unfortunate breakdown in communications, because it was understood that no special permissions were required when a parish wanted to invite guests to address them.<sup>12</sup> Of course, he did not speak for Lithuanian

<sup>10</sup> Burkevičius V. (1885-23.XI/6.XII/-1965), JKA, Viliaus Žano Burkevičiaus asmens byla (unpaged); December 10, 1965 letter of Jonas Kalvanas to Fricas Šlenteris, JKA, Atskiri nuorašai nuo 1958.06.27 (unpaged); *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1968, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1968, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 147, 22-22ad; Pranešimas apie Lietuvos TSR



Commissioner Justas Rugienis, and it is more than likely that what he said was stated only for the benefit of western observers and did not correspond with the facts.

#### REACTIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER TO ECUMENICAL EVENTS AND ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE THEM

Commissioner Rugienis did not appear to have been overly concerned about the ecumenical contacts of the Lithuanians. What did concern him was that the meetings of the Lithuanian Lutheran clergy with the archbishops of Latvia and Estonia always seemed to culminate in festal divine services. Rugienis saw this as a blatant attempt to create enthusiasm among the people and invigorate them. He wrote to Moscow on March 14, 1967 that he would much rather that the clergy would sit quietly together somewhere where they would not attract any public attention. In his view it was advisable to limit excessive trips and meetings of the Baltic clergy.<sup>13</sup>

Another ecumenical service in Lithuania was held in Tauragė, and again it was the Lutherans who were the hosts. Participating in the service on June 25, 1967, the 400th anniversary of the 1567 founding of the congregation, were Consistory Chairman Burkevičius, officiant, assisted by Pastor Jonas Kalvanas. Other participants were Archbishop Tūrs, Provost Pēteris Kleperis, Archbishop Jaan Kiivit, Sr., August Leepin, General Secretary of the Estonian Synod, Russian Archpriest Joan Semioniov, Dean Stanislovas Gorodeckis of the Roman Catholic parish in Tauragė and Reformed Ministers Povilas Jašinskas and Mykolas Frankas. As was always the case this jubilee celebration attracted large crowds of Lutherans as well as many worshipers from the other confessions.<sup>14</sup>

Evangelikų-liuteronių Bažnyčios atstovų susitikimą su Pasaulinės Liuteronų Sąjungos delegacija Rygoje, 1966 m. rugsėjo 27-29 d., JKA, Pasaulinė Liuteronų Sąjunga 1966–1967 (unpaged).

<sup>13</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 75, 37-38.

<sup>14</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 74, 42-44; June 30, 1967 transcript of Jonas Kalvanas to Commissioner Justas Rugienis, JKA, Atskiri nuorašai nuo 1958.06.27 (unpaged).

Rugienis was not prepared to proscribe such services, but he made this whole ecumenical question an important topic in his January 1968 report to Moscow. He noted that the Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism had insisted that Roman Catholic priests take the initiative in establishing ecumenical contacts with other Christians. He stated that not much attention had been paid to the establishment of ecumenical contacts in Lithuania by Catholic leaders. Priests were permitted to participate in such gatherings, but the initiative was always taken by the Orthodox or the Lutherans. It seemed that the Roman Catholic leaders were of the opinion that their Church was so much larger than any other Christian group in the country that they could afford to take a passive role. However, he did note that the decree of the Council has not been without effect. One no longer heard sermons condemning non-Catholics or consigning them to hell. Even non-believers were being spoken of in kinder terms. Of course there were still a few fanatical priests who outspokenly condemned any form of ecumenism.

Rugienis noted that, on the other hand the Lutherans were showing great enthusiasm even to the point of turning every special parish celebration into an ecumenical event. On such occasions they would abbreviate the liturgy and put their central emphasis on those parts of the Divine Service concerning which there was general agreement between the ecumenical partners. What might cause trouble was simply left out. As a result such services were shorter than usual but more festive.

The Russian Orthodox also showed some initiative in sponsoring ecumenical services. According to Rugienis Archpriest Fiodor Rakecki, a highly educated man who served the parishes in Lebeniškiiai, Zarasai, and Gegobrastai established a contact with Roman Catholic Priests Albertas Talačka of Lebeniškiiai and Juozas Varnas of Vabalninkas. He suggested that an ecumenical service be held in his Lebeniškiiai church. Father Varnas agreed and it was agreed that the service would be held on Holy Trinity Sunday, June 11, 1967. Varnas announced the coming service to his parishioners from the pulpit and mentioned that Archbishop Antonij of the Russian Orthodox Church would be officiating. The rumor soon spread throughout the region that this service was being held to bring the Russian Orthodox clergy and believers under the Roman obedience.

This infuriated many Russians, especially the old people, who defiantly proclaimed that they would die before they would surrender their ancient faith. Of course, no such reunion was either planned or carried out. What did occur and caused great concern to Commissioner Rugienis and earned father Varnas a strong reprimand, was that at the offering he put 65 rubles in the plate. Rugienis declared that this was a clear violation of Soviet religious laws. No further ecumenical services as such were held for a time, although Roman Catholic priests were invited to participate in the funeral services of Orthodox priests. Rugienis noted that although there were cordial relations between Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests, no official dialogues had been instituted in Lithuania and no contacts had been initiated between the Christians and Jews.

There were two groups which were not expressing any interest in ecumenism at all, he wrote. The first was the Old Believers. This Church was shunned by the other Churches and their priests were described as ignorant old men. The Old Believers took an equally dim view of other Churches and especially of atheists who were nothing but dogs according to Vilnius Priest N. Abramov in his pre-Christmas sermon to his people. Abramov declared that the atheists were an ungrateful bunch who bit the hand that fed them and needed to be kept at a distance.

The other was the Reformed Church the members of which were very anti-Catholic. One Reformed minister said in private that Roman Catholic priests always looked down upon them even when they came with smiles in their faces and declared that they wanted to be friends. It was clear that they only wanted to entice the Reformed into the Roman Church. He went on to say that none of the Reformed would ever become Romanists. Pious Reformed people had long memories, he said. They would never forget the errors of Rome and the great pains that the Roman Church had caused them. He went on to say that the less pious people were more likely to become atheists than Romanists. Commissioner Rugienis added his own comment that while the Roman Catholics were miles away from atheism, for the Reformed it would be only a single step.

It was his conclusion that the ecumenical movement had not made much progress in Lithuania. It existed chiefly on the personal and had

little or no effect on the institutional level. He ventured the opinion that ecumenical services were all for show. In them the clergy exalted themselves to emphasize their power over their congregations.<sup>15</sup>

In a subsequent report in January 1969 Rugienis gave a further evaluation of the ecumenical movement. This time he looked at it in pragmatic social terms and described it as not as much a result of the influence of the Vatican II, as an outward expression of the new socialist reality of friendship and proletarian internationalism among people who in the days of the old bourgeois nationalism had been at enmity with each other. What Vatican II proposed was unacceptable both to Lithuanian Catholics and other Christian churches. So the present movement could be best described as a passing phenomenon in the life of the nation with no real substance to it. It was little more than an expression of the interests of individual priests. It was obvious to everyone that the Vatican Council initiative was political rather than religious. It was simply an attempt to create a united front against “godlessness,” that is against communism and the communist goal of opening up a new era for all mankind. He wrote that his own careful study of Vatican ecumenical documents had not revealed any single central objective of the movement. The reason why was clear to him. The central objective, which was being kept from the people under the guise of religious language, was really the mobilization of the masses into an anticommunist movement. He further stated that hidden purposes in the ecumenical movement would never accomplish their objective in Lithuania.

It was his opinion that the dialogue between believers and unbelievers called for by John XXIII and Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council was a fanciful notion. It could never happen. The purpose of this invitation was simply to spread anticommunist propaganda and obstruct the forward march of scientific atheism and communism. This would have no effect in Lithuania, he stated, because in this country the believers were actively working together with atheists “in building paradise on earth.” There had for many years been dialogue between

<sup>15</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 74, l. 50-54.

communists and believers in Lithuania, and it had nothing to do with any Vatican initiative. Its purpose was to free man from his bondage to religious superstition and unscientific thinking and replace them with a materialist worldview.<sup>16</sup>

Over a period of several years there were a number of ecumenical services, mostly to celebrate special occasions, such as the consecration of Lutheran Archbishop Janis Matulis in Latvia on September 14, 1969. Included among the participants were Pastor Kalvanas and representatives of the Russian Orthodox, Old Believers, and Baptist Churches. The 60th birthday of Archbishop Matulis was observed on February 21, 1971 with Pastor Kalvanas, Estonian Archbishop Alfred Tooming, Latvian Roman Catholic Bishop Julijans Vaivods, and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church attending. An ecumenical celebration also took place at the investiture of Jonas Kalvanas as senior priest of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church. This took place on June 20, 1971 with representatives of the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches participating. In response to the participation of Roman Catholic Priest Stanislovas Gorodeckis, Pastor Kalvanas paid a courtesy visit to Telšiai Bishops Juozas Pletkus and Liudas Povilionis on March 29, 1972. They in turn visited the Lutheran consistory on April 20.<sup>17</sup> Later on September 17, 1972 an ecumenical service was held in Alkiškiai sponsored by the local Lutheran parish to celebrate the 70th birthday of Pastor Rauskinas and 40th anniversary of his ordination. Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic clergy participated. The 80th birthday of Prelate Rapolas Kuodis of Žemaičių Naumiestis was celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church in that town on July 17, 1973. Local Lutheran Pastor Jonas Armonaitis participated in the service and recalled that the prelate had participated eight years earlier in the 80th birthday of consistory Chairman Burkevičius.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 76, l. 22-29.

<sup>17</sup> *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1970, p. 20; *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1972, p. 2; *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1973, p. 19-20.

<sup>18</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 203, l. 118; *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1974, p. 19, 33.

The Reformed held a sort of ecumenical service in Biržai on July 25, 1971 to which they invited only Lutherans and Baptists. The January 1968 analysis of ecumenism in Lithuania by Rugienis was at least partially accurate. It was largely ceremonial. No dialogues or doctrinal discussions were ever initiated.<sup>19</sup>

New concerns were raised by the commissioner's office when in 1972 the new Russian Orthodox Bishop Anatolij arrived in Lithuania. Assistant Commissioner Andrej Murnikov informed Moscow on February 15, 1973 that the bishop was not behaving as expected. He had begun his ministry in Lithuania by visiting his parishes to invigorate the believers. He was also actively seeking stronger ecumenical ties with the Old Believers, Roman Catholics, and Lutherans by meeting with their highest administrative officers and participating in ecumenical services in Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches. Murnikov stated that when Anatolij came to Klaipėda to visit the Russian Orthodox parish on July 8, 1973 he also attended the Lutheran Divine Service and brought his greetings to the congregation. Murnikov viewed this with some alarm, stating that while ecumenism on the international level for the purpose of promoting peace was perfectly acceptable, ecumenical programs within the country were more troublesome because they stirred up the people, created enthusiasm, and helped to fortify a united front against atheism.<sup>20</sup>

The new Commissioner Kazimieras Tumėnas summoned the bishop to his office to caution him that the Religious Affairs Department expected him to act more circumspectly and with greater modesty. This caution went unheeded and the commissioner wrote on February 8, 1974 that it appeared it would be necessary to apply pressure on him through the Moscow Patriarchate. However he did state that the bishop's sermons did not contain anything offensive.<sup>21</sup>

In the course of that year Anatolij was moved elsewhere and Bishop German was put in charge of the Lithuanian Russian Orthodox

<sup>19</sup> Lietuvos Ev. Reformatų Konsistorijos posėdžių protokolų knyga 1946–1995 m., p. 115-119.

<sup>20</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 85, l. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 88, l. 33-34; LCVA f. R-754, a. 13, b. 1213, l. 34-35.

parishes. The 1976 report of Commissioner Tumėnas to Moscow stated that German was every bit as troublesome as his predecessor. He was working to revitalize his parishes and strengthen ecumenical ties with other Churches. Although the bishop presented himself as a loyal soviet citizen, even a patriot, many of his actions were causes for concern. In the 1976 report of the bishop to the patriarchate he stated that he was maintaining close ecumenical ties with Roman Catholics and the Lutherans, and that Lutherans were worshipping in Orthodox Churches in Klaipėda, Šiauliai, and Mažeikiai.<sup>22</sup>

Bishop German was one of the participants in the Tauragė Divine Service celebrating the 35th anniversary of ordination of Pastor Kalvanas on July 27, 1975. At that service he greeted the pastor, the assembled Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Reformed clergy, saying that he was a newcomer among them but not a stranger. He said that he had known Pastor Kalvanas for several years from the time of Prague Peace Conferences and had always held him in high regard. He said also that he knew that he was closely related to all present in their mutual faith and confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Savior and Lord. Similar greetings came from the Archbishop Matulis of Latvia and Archbishop Alfred Tooming of Estonia, as well as Dean Alfonsas Sirus, Pastor of the Tauragė Roman Catholic Parish.<sup>23</sup> A year earlier, on April 21, 1974, a service in the same church had celebrated the 60th birthday of Pastor Kalvanas with Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests participating. A Roman Catholic ecumenical service was held in the church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Šiauliai on November 23, 1975 to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the building of the church and to consecrate a new high altar. Dean Liudvikas Mažonavičius of Šiauliai invited Pastor Rauskinas of the Šiauliai Lutheran parish and other parishes in the region to participate and bring greetings from the Lutherans.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> LCVA f. R-181, a. 3, b. 90, l. 35; LCVA f. R-181, a. 1, b. 217, l. 7.

<sup>23</sup> G. Rauskinas, „Kaip malonu ir miela,“ *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1976, p. 20-26; *Lietuvos TSR evangelikų bažnyčios kalendorius*, 1975, p. 25-27.

<sup>24</sup> November 16, 1975 letter of Liudvikas Mažonavičius to Gustavas Rauskinas, JKA, II-asis pokarinis visuotinis sinodas Tauragės Martyno Mažvydo bažnyčioje 1970.08.23, introdukcija 1971.06.20 (unpaged).

#### RUDIMENTARY ATTEMPTS TO INITIATE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

Although the participation of Roman Catholics in ecumenical services was a response to *Unitatis Redintegratio* formulated in Vatican II, it did not represent a real attempt by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Lithuania to fulfill in any serious manner the objectives of that document. No Roman Catholic bishop took part in any ecumenical gathering involving both Orthodox and Lutheran clergy in the 1960's and 1970's. Those who did participate were either deans or parish pastors. It was only in private that Roman Catholic bishops met with leaders of other Churches, and only with the Russian Orthodox were they willing to appear in public services, and such services were held only infrequently.

At no time were there any theological discussions or dialogues between the Churches. It was left to the local clergy in the Churches to meet with each other to share the results of the dialogues going on in Europe and North America. In 1971 Pastor Kalvanas sent to the Roman Catholic Senior Priest Albinas Budrikis in Žeimelis the document, entitled *Official reports (Offiziellen Bericht)* of the Lutheran – Roman Catholic dialogues in Europe. This marked the beginning of extended correspondence between the two. Father Budreikis responded that he was delighted to see the high degree of agreement that had been achieved in the dialogues. He was especially appreciative of the papers presented by Jan Cardinal Willebrands and American Lutheran Church President Dr. Kent Knutson. He was also delighted at the high degree of unanimity expressed about the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Ministry in the document *Amt und Abendmahl*. He stated that he was aware that some theologians might want to go further and others felt that already the dialogues had gone to far, but that it was clear that significant hurdles still lay ahead: the Eucharistic sacrifice, birth control, and the education of children of mixed families. He noted that in the long run none of these should inhibit the possibility of intercommunion between the Churches.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> May 18 and June 22, 1971 letters of Albinas Budrikis to Jonas Kalvanas, JKA, Lietuvos TSR evangelikų-liuteronų Bažnyčios pirmojo pokarinio visuotinio sinodo, įvykusio Kretingos bažnyčioje 1955 metų gegužės mėn. 22 d. (unpaged).



Such theological conversations were not taken at the highest official levels. It may be that the Roman Catholic hierarchy was not anxious to enter into dialogue with Churches from the East or “Ecclesial Communities” in the West. Ecumenical hospitality was in order because it had been ordered, but the hierarchy was unwilling to move beyond that.