

Church in Eastern Europe seeks help to rebuild

Continued from page 1
cials.

It "is a call to a fruitful encounter among those who are coming out of the catacombs and those who are too used to living outside the catacombs," said Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the pontifical councils for non-believers and for culture.

A pivotal problem is that East European churches were frozen in time prior to the sweeping changes in church life and doctrine brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

Catholicism survived the highly restricted and catacomb conditions without the evolution in teachings and practices experienced in the West. Church officials' travel was highly restricted in the Soviet bloc as was the importation and publication of religious literature.

As part of a delegation sent by the USCC to Eastern Europe in 1990, Father Sarauskas remembered stopping at one Catholic parish and listening to a priest apologize to him for celebrating Mass with his back to the congregation — a liturgical style reminiscent of the pre-Vatican II era.

The pastor explained that his parish had been unable to revamp its interior or its altar because his nation's recently deposed communist authorities had forbidden any post-Vatican II architectural renovations when they were in power.

The priest emphasized to Father Sarauskas that his parish had wanted to implement other Second Vatican Council reforms, but — like Catholic churches throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — it lacked the information and resources to implement such change.

"You couldn't reform the liturgy unless you had the liturgical books to reform it," commented Father Sarauskas.

Such material poverty of the Catholic Church in what was once the Soviet-dominated world of Eastern Europe compelled the USCC to establish his office in fall of 1990, observed Father Sarauskas.

To help once-repressed Catholicism blossom again in the formerly communist nations, the USCC — in conjunction with bishops' conferences in Eastern European nations — has established three areas to which it channels any funds it collects from the nation's

POLAND
36 million Catholics, 30,000 Old Catholics
MAJOR RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Relation of church to state (now constitutionally separated). Abortion legislation (abortion is liberalized under laws established by former communist state).

CZECHOSLOVAKIA
10.7 million Catholics
MAJOR POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Slovakia wants independence and is backed by Slovak bishops. Church seeks return of buildings seized by former communist government. Also concerned about rebuilding faith after more than 40 years of repression by atheistic state.

HUNGARY
6.49 million Catholics
MAJOR RELIGIOUS ISSUES: The church is faced with rebuilding its clergy corps. About 38 percent of Hungary's priests are over 60 years old and the ratio of laity to clergy — 2,400 per priest — is about twice the European average.

YUGOSLAVIA
6.7 million Catholics
MAJOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Mostly Catholic Croatia has declared independence and is at war with militias of Serbs who reside in Croatia and Serbian-dominated federal army.

LITHUANIA
2.68 million Catholics
MAJOR RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Church, with few material resources, faces challenge of re-instilling faith after 50 years of hostile Soviet rule.

UKRAINE
5 million Catholics
MAJOR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Religious conflict growing over Catholic church property given to Russian Orthodox after outlawing of Ukrainian Catholic Church by Stalin government in 1946. Cardinal Lubachivsky recently transferred his see-in-exile from Rome back to Kiev.

ROMANIA
1.8 million Catholics
MAJOR POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS ISSUES: Largely Catholic ethnic Hungarian minority making a range of demands from cultural autonomy to union with Hungary. Only tiny fraction of 2,000 Catholic churches seized under Ceausescu regime have been returned. Catholic-Orthodox relations wary. Majority Orthodox dominated religion under Ceausescu rule and still play the dominant role.



dioceses:

- Training and formation of priests and religious. Father Sarauskas noted that the largest part of funds earmarked for such training and formation will be used for the re-establishment of seminaries and houses of formation in such countries as Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

The Lithuanian church will use USCC funding to educate its first class of seminarians in almost 50 years at St. Casimir's Pontifical College in Rome for training. Father Sarauskas and other observers pointed that Lithuanian seminaries were brutally dismantled in the wake of the Soviet Union's occupation during the Stalinist era.

- Training of lay catechists and provision of catechetical materials.

"The church is now able to teach religion," Father Sarauskas said. "(Yet,) there are simply not enough priests and sisters to do that."

The director commented that a number of Eastern European churches have established catechetical commissions

designed to provide guidance to lay catechists. The USCC, for example, is helping Polish Catholics establish a national catechetical commission as well as providing printing and communications equipment for an inter-diocesan catechetical commission in Lithuania.

- Funding for Catholic radio, television and news services.

USCC monies will help Poles establish a national Catholic news service; Czech Catholics establish a radio station in the capital city of Prague; Ukrainians build a radio transmitter in the city of Lvov for Catholic broadcasts; and support Latvian Catholics who operate a radio and TV center.

In addition to those projects, the USCC's Central and Eastern European office is supporting the establishment of pro-life and natural family programs in Czechoslovakia; helping women's religious communities expand in Romania; promoting the publication and distribution of Catholic literature in Estonia and Russia; and enabling Albanians to restore a cathedral — once used by the communists as a gymnasium — which will serve as the center of Catholic life for the nation's 300,000 Catholics.

The USCC is also awaiting the cessation of hostilities in Yugoslavia so it can help Catholics develop a social welfare organization and a national catechetical commission.

Since 1990, the USCC has collected \$6.3 million in funds from the nation's dioceses for its Eastern European work, Father Sarauskas said.

Several parishes in the Rochester diocese slated collections for the USCC fund in March, while others collected over the weekend of April 4-5.

Father Ralph J. Fraats, administrator of St. George's Lithuanian Parish in Rochester, noted that his 135 parishioners contributed \$900 toward to the USCC fund. He added that Father Pugevicius will help him celebrate liturgical services during Holy Week — April 12-19 — at St. George's Parish.

Father Pugevicius detailed the efforts of his own organization, Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, which was founded in 1963 to assist persecuted Lithuanian Catholics.

The Lithuanian church was devastated by communist persecution,

Father Pugevicius said, and much of its property was confiscated, disfigured and destroyed. To reverse the effects of such destruction, the organization is aiding Lithuanian Catholics in a variety of ways. For example, the organization is providing funds for the church to build a Catholic youth center in a building that once housed a religious congregation, he said.

More important to the church in Eastern Europe than rebuilding edifices is rebuilding the foundations of faith that were strained by years of atheistic communist totalitarianism, Father Pugevicius explained.

"Perhaps the worst thing the system did was rob people of their spiritual values," he commented.

Now, however, the leaders of Eastern Europe's new system are looking with favor upon the church's burgeoning role as a shaper of civic values in the fledgling democracies. Such leaders are realizing that "spiritual values are absolutely necessary for a state to function," Father Pugevicius added.

The church-state relations evolving in Eastern Europe have seen some conflicts already, however. In Poland, for example, where the church played a pivotal role in prying the communist grip from the nation, the church appears to be losing political ground.

The hierarchy was rebuffed in its campaign for a constitutional ban on abortion and on writing church-state separation-out of the constitution.

But the hierarchy, including the pope, says the church has no political agenda.

"The church does not present herself as a center of power above or parallel with society, but as a center of service," the pope has said.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Contains material from Catholic News Service reports.

To learn more about the USCC's work in Central and Eastern Europe, or to contribute to its efforts, contact Father R. George Sarauskas at the Office to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe, United States Catholic Conference, 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1194, or call 202/541-3400.

bituary

Sister Lucetta Lougen, 75, longtime teacher

Sister Mary Lucetta Lougen, SSND, a former elementary school teacher at Holy Ghost, St. Margaret Mary, and Holy Family schools, died Thursday, March 26, 1992, at Norwalk Hospital in Connecticut. She was 75.

Sister Lucetta was born Dec. 29, 1916, in Buffalo. She entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame from St. Mary's Parish in Buffalo on Aug. 9, 1934.

A professed member of the order for 57 years, Sister Lucetta spent 50 of those as an elementary school teacher.

Sister Lucetta taught at Rochester's Holy Family School, 899 Jay St., from 1943-50; St. Margaret Mary School, 400 Rogers Parkway, Irondequoit, from 1962-73; and Holy Ghost School, 220 Coldwater Road, Rochester, from 1973-84.

Sister Roberta Tierney, SSND, who lived with Sister Lucetta at St. Margaret Mary's from 1962-68, said she will remember her as a "quiet, gentle person" who dedicated herself to "a life of prayer and a life of teaching."

Sister Lucetta generally taught eighth grade, noted Sister Tierney, currently the parish life coordinator at St. Cecilia's Church, 2763 Culver Road, Rochester.

"She was a very good teacher," Sister Tierney said, adding that Sister Lucetta taught more than just language arts. "She taught values. She taught the students how to work independently. She taught them how to apply the lessons to their lives."

In 1984, Sister Lucetta retired from teaching and moved to the SSND motherhouse in Wilton.

Mass of the Resurrection for Sister Lucetta was celebrated at the motherhouse on March 30. Interment was at St. Mary's Cemetery in Bethel, Conn.

A memorial Mass for Sister Lucetta is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 30, at Holy Ghost Church.

Donations in memory of Sister Mary Loucetta Lougen may be made to the SSND Development Fund, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, Conn. 06897.