

## The Hungarian Minority in Romania

*For an account of the background to these documents, see the Chronicle item on pp. 204-206.*

### Open Letter to the Bishops and Other Leaders of the Christian Churches of Hungary

It is with confidence that the undersigned church members ask you to address the faithful in the form of a pastoral letter to be read out in every church on Christmas Day 1986, in which:

— you express the deep sympathy felt by our churches towards the Hungarians of Romania, whose loss of human rights as a minority has produced a tragic situation;

— you request our congregations and parishes to pray during their Christmas celebrations that the situation of our sorely tried brethren might improve, in a spirit of justice and reconciliation;

— you invite our churches to establish a charity savings fund and distribute the gifts of the faithful to help our needy brethren as you best see fit;

— you warn that hatred should be put aside, and encourage everyone to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus "overcome evil with good", while trusting in the good intentions of the great majority of the Romanian people, who are ready to exercise understanding;

— you express the confidence of our church members in all activity on the part of the government of the Hungarian People's Republic which is aimed at regulating the situation of the minorities in Hungary in an exemplary manner, and improving that of the Hungarians in Romania through inter-governmental and other international relations.

We also ask you simultaneously to initiate, in a spirit of reconciliation, inter-church discussions with the Romanian Orthodox Church about problems concerning the human rights of Romania's Hungarian minority. We ask you, furthermore, to do the same with all those international church bodies from whom our brethren might have hope of some kind of help in a situation which is becoming increasingly difficult.

At the present time we recall with pain the fact that, regrettably, no joint pastoral letter was issued by the leaders of our Christian churches when several hundred thousand of our Hungarian Jewish brethren were dragged off to their death. That failure burdens our Christian conscience to this very day.

We appeal to you with confidence, awaiting your collective pastoral letter.

### Statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference

. . . The specific and concrete task of expressing solidarity devolves upon us, upon Hungarians. Because of historical changes, one third of the Hungarian nationality lives outside our borders, and those Hungarians constitute a minority in their own countries. Although we are separated by territorial boundaries, our common language, common history and common moral and national character bind us together.

The lot of minorities is not an easy one: they must be faithful citizens of their own countries, if they are to be able faithfully to preserve their own Hungarianness at the same time. If this is lost within the minority

context, then they become rootless; if, however, it is preserved, they then enrich that country by bringing to it their own particular national values.

There have already been many fruitful initiatives which have enabled Hungarians living in minority situations to preserve their national identity. [Preservation of national identity] means, among other things, that they should be able to maintain their connection with our motherland, with our national history and culture; they should be able to receive Hungarian literature, including Hungarian-language Scriptures and religious books. All this serves to preserve and strengthen our Hungarian character in a spirit of solidarity.

In our motherland too, there live citizens of other nationalities. Universal solidarity requires that we should hold their national qualities and characteristics in respect, and, therefore, that their just claims

should be honoured. While we would like to see this realised with regard to Hungarians living in minority situations, it is with pain that we must see that our Hungarian brethren living in Romania do not enjoy in full measure human rights based on solidarity. It is painful not only because it concerns our Hungarian brethren, but also because disadvantageous discrimination on the basis of national characteristics is weakening the inner unity of, obstructing the development of, and producing tensions in, a friendly country. There are those who use this fact to create political tensions. We are totally against this, because we would like to maintain good neighbourly relations. Our clear guiding aim and hope is that the situation of our Hungarian brethren should improve, and, together with this, that the service of friendship, development, and universal peace shall be strengthened among us in a spirit of solidarity.

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