

humanitarian values are preparing for a new war threatening all forms of life on earth with destruction. With all our strength we protest against endeavours directed by the United States towards world domination, which cause the governments of peoples standing beneath the influence of traditional Christianity to accumulate more nuclear weapons. We are convinced about the reasons for these American efforts: the attainment of power supremacy, as well as a greedy interest in drawing great profit from the arms trade. We protest also against the efforts of the imperialist powers to mislead believers by giving the impression that the threat now being directed against the socialist system is in fact defence of the Faith. We give thanks to all those people throughout the world, whatever their world view, who in these days, yielding to human love, courageously protest against the deployment of weapons threatening a nuclear holocaust in Western Europe." The function of the Church Peace Committee, according to *Népszabadság*, will be "the organisation of collective peace and social action among the individual religious bodies", and "to coordinate service for peace with the work of the National Peace Council". The Committee will operate within the framework of the National Peace Council. The formation of the Church Peace Committee comes in the wake of the harassment and dissolution in July 1983 of the independent peace organisation "Dialogue Peace Group".

On 18 February 1984 *Népszabadság* published a feature dealing with the Churches' involvement in the "peace movement", entitled "Our Faith in Peace". This article shed light on the Communist Party's view of the function and aims of the Hungarian Churches' "peace campaign" in both national and international forums:

"The Hungarian Catholic priests' peace movement has had a past of several decades. It would probably be a superfluous exercise to enumerate those political positions for which they have again and again fought, and for which they are now fighting

in the movement against nuclear war, thereby supporting the active foreign policy of our homeland. The weight of the political positions of the representatives of the Hungarian Churches is also felt in international church life. By their actions they take a stand on the side of socialist construction, especially when they are working for the most fundamental international condition of socialist construction. The authority of the Hungarian clerical peace movement is not some kind of Hungarian peculiarity. It is part of the world's increasingly powerful church peace movement, but its strength, and the credit of its word, rest on the basis of the common efforts which characterise the connection between the Churches and the State here in Hungary. The Hungarian clerical peace movement is an active part of the peace movement of our homeland. In the leadership and on the committees of the National Peace Council we find representatives of the Churches. They have won for themselves recognition and an important place, not merely with words springing from their faith, but also with deeds. The leading bishop of the Reformed Church Dr Tibor Bartha has perhaps most accurately defined their aims when he wrote: 'The Christian Church must call a spade a spade, and before the public opinion of the world reveal the role of military and industrial capital.' This is an appreciation of the fact that the campaign for peace has a significance both at home and abroad, and that a nuclear war is avoidable [. . .] The Hungarian peace movement encompasses a wide cross-section of society, in which the Hungarian Churches also play a serious role, thus pulling into that effort many believers who feel they have a responsibility for peace. We live in a difficult age, an age in which all kinds of sound-thinking, peace-loving people must collaborate with each other. Millions are doing this around the world and in Hungary also. Among them we find those Churches that are honourably executing their work. They are lifting up their words for the peace of man in the spirit of *Pax Humana*."

Hungarian Protestant Churches Tackle Social Evils

Since the early 1950s when the State forced the dissolution of the "Union of the Inner Mission" — the umbrella organisation for Hungary's evangelical social relief agencies

— the social work of the country's Protestant Churches has been severely limited. To be sure, the Churches were able to retain a number of old people's and retarded chil-

dren's homes and schools, but at this point their organised direct social action virtually came to an end. According to the Theology of Service, or Diaconia Theology as it is known in the Lutheran Church, the Protestant Churches have worked for social regeneration almost exclusively by adding their voice of assent in national and international forums to the main lines of the government's programme for the construction of socialism.

The 1980s, however, have seen a broadening of the Protestant Churches' understanding of social outreach. Over thirty-five years of communist rule have not created a society free from serious social ills, which are similar in many cases to those characteristic of advanced western societies. Divorce, financial corruption, suicide, alcoholism and abortion have reached epidemic proportions in present-day Hungary. Moreover, the government's economic policy, which has produced a spectacular rise in the country's standard of living by any eastern European standards, has also produced the side-effect of increasing economic inequality between those in a position to benefit from freer enterprise and those on low fixed incomes. For some years Hungary's Marxist social scientists have openly discussed these problems, and now the Protestant Churches are showing signs of joining them.

As a result of a December 1982 decision of the Ecumenical Council — which represents Hungary's Protestant Churches — to support social work among "drifting youth", a national organisation has been established to this end. Its Secretary, Mrs Márta Hubai Muzsnai, revealed the nature of the problems that the mission is intending to deal with when she stated in a report published in *Reformatusok Lapja* of 22 January 1984: "Alcoholism and drug taking are extending more and more among certain circles of our young people. We hear with consternation that the number of violent acts committed by young people is ever

increasing. And we stand in astonishment whenever we meet insensitive, dissipated, cynical or boorish youth." To meet this challenge the mission's leadership is now considering proposals for the establishment of a choir and sports organisations and contact with special units in hospitals, chaplaincies, clubs and coffee houses. Participating churches have been asked to give special attention to family problems. The work will be carried on largely by volunteers, and an appeal for churchmen with a background in medicine, sociology, law, psychology and education has been issued by the organisers.

The Protestant Churches have also been grappling in a new way with the problem of alcoholism. In this field the Reformed Church has taken the lead. It has established a "Save the Alcoholic Mission". To date this organisation has sponsored several conferences for churchmen and has begun to establish a personal counselling service. In an autumn 1983 conference in Budapest the psychiatrist Dr Dalma Böszörményi left no doubt as to the extent of alcohol abuse in Hungary when she presented statistics showing that the country stands in fourth place in terms of international alcohol consumption. The attention of the Lutheran Church was drawn to this social evil in January of this year when Rev. Miklós Madocsai delivered a lecture entitled "Our Task in the Fight against Alcoholism" at a diaconia conference.

The fulfilment of the Churches' social responsibility is still seen by Protestant leaders to lie primarily in their political contribution to the construction of a socialist society. Yet a start has been made to explore new ways of alleviating two serious and stubborn social ills. Observers of eastern European religious affairs will watch with interest to see if these programmes can make a successful transition from the church and the conference hall to the homes, schools and work places of the Hungarian people.

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