

The statements made by those standing trial seem to confirm that, for conscientious objectors in Poland, the issue is not so much the principle of military service itself, but the right to freedom of choice and personal conscience. Wojciech Jankowski, a teacher tried in Gdynia in December 1985, declared in his statement that violence was an evil which could be justified to some degree when there was no other possible means of self-defence. However, peace could never be achieved by destroying the individuality of the young, forcing them to act against their beliefs, and teaching them to kill, he said. Jankowski was given a prison sentence of 3½ years.

Tomasz Wacko, a founder member of "Freedom and Peace", was arrested in February 1986. In an interview with *KOS* he explained that he was refusing to take the military oath because it committed him to loyalty to the Soviet alliance. "An oath should be an act of conscience, and its text should be limited to the defence of one's country and not refer to ideologies and alliances," he said;

The army should be concerned about protecting the sovereignty and independence of the nation . . . while at present it forms part of a system which seeks to break human character and conscience. My refusal to take the oath, then, is a protest against the entire system of

oppression in Poland today.

The arrest of Jacek Czaputowicz and Piotr Niemczyk,* two other leading activists from the movement, on the grounds that they belonged to an illegal organisation, inspired a strongly worded protest from the Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, which was published in the underground press in March. The movement also appealed for support from peace movements abroad and from the Catholic Church on the grounds that "Freedom and Peace" had been founded in response to the sermon on the nature of peace given by Pope John Paul II on 1 January 1985.

According to available sources, the appeal appears to have generated a firm response only from the French organisation CODENE. The church has not yet given any formal indication of its position, although if conscientious objection goes on gaining ground in Poland, it would be reasonable to watch for some comment from the church hierarchy, particularly if "Freedom and Peace" continues to emphasise its affiliation with Catholicism and its commitment to Christian principles.

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*Czaputowicz and Niemczyk have since been released as part of the Polish government amnesty in September 1986.

Pressure for Reform in the Hungarian Lutheran Church.

In April 1986 an open letter entitled "A Brotherly Word" — urging extensive theological and practical reform — was delivered to the Hungarian Lutheran Bishop Gyula Nagy and to many of the church's congregations (see document on pp. 330-31 of this issue). The letter was drafted in March by a reform group of 19 distinguished Lutherans, including the New Testament scholar Pastor Zoltán Dóka, and the concert pianist Árpád Fasang Jr. Responding to what they see as a "crisis" in the life of their church, the 19 criticised the church's official theology — diaconia theology — which has been controversial because of its conformity to

the political norms of the Hungarian state, and because of the monopoly it enjoys in church life. The group also called for the election of church leaders "without outside influence" (a veiled reference to the decisive role played by the state in church appointments), a return to theological pluralism, ecclesiastical decentralisation, greater lay participation in church life, the reestablishment of a Lutheran grammar school, and the holding of open conferences as a forum for dialogue.

"A Brotherly Word" is the latest in a series of attempts (spanning thirty years) by dissenting Lutherans to bring about

renewal and a return to theological pluralism. In August 1956, 11 pastors signed a statement calling for the rebirth of the evangelisation movement that had been suppressed in the early 1950s, and for an examination both of the church's teachings on contemporary issues and of its personnel policy. The 11 also condemned an element inside the evangelisation movement, which "always proclaims only those parts of the message of the Word which are in harmony with the so-called 'party line' ". According to the now retired Bishop Lajos Vető, in the summer and autumn of 1956 the church leadership was also charged with governing illegally, teaching about political affairs without reference to theology or church tradition, making partisan appointments and adopting a system based on the "cult of personality".

The response of the Lutheran leadership to the appeal of the 11 pastors was to a large extent positive. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 motivated a deeply divided and bewildered Hungarian Communist Party to try to broaden its narrow base of popular support and diminish cold war tensions with the West. As part of the de-Stalinisation process, the state worked toward "normalising" church affairs. In the spring, the state negotiated the release from detention of Catholic Archbishop József Grösz, and arranged his reinstatement as chairman of the Bishops' Conference. According to the former Prime Minister, András Hegedűs, the state contemplated releasing the imprisoned Cardinal József Mindszenty, but it refused to meet the Cardinal's demand for a full rehabilitation. In August, the state became directly involved in negotiations with international Reformed and Lutheran leaders for the de-Stalinisation of church life while the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches was meeting at the Hungarian resort of Galyatető. The Lutheran reform programme was revealed in early October. On 5 October the state announced the rehabilitation of the deposed Bishop Lajos Ordass. Three days later, Ordass's episcopal dignity was restored by the church authorities. On 9 October Bishop Vető unveiled a 24-point reform package. It focused on correcting irregularities in consultative

processes and pastoral appointments, establishing a new editorial committee for the reform of church publications, and cultivating closer relations with the Lutheran World Federation.

The outbreak of the 1956 uprising on 23 October and the subsequent overthrow of Imre Nagy's government by the Soviet Army made Vető's programme obsolete. The consolidation of power became the main task of the newly re-formed communist party. For the churches, this meant state demands for the rooting out of pastors regarded as politically unreliable, and the establishment of a new system of church management which would produce greater stability. In the Lutheran Church this task fell mainly to Bishop Zoltán Káldy, who in 1958 replaced the now twice-deposed Bishop Ordass. Káldy's policy was to devise a theology that would be recognisably Lutheran, while at the same time committing the church to serving the interests of the state. Meanwhile, he assumed autocratic power and suppressed dissenting voices. Some pastors lost their posts or were transferred to out-of-the-way places. Many others retreated into silence for fear of losing their livelihood and status.

Encouragement was given to dissenting Lutherans in the summer of 1984, when Pastor Dóka and Pastor László Csengődy made public statements to coincide with the Budapest Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. Dóka made a sharp attack on diaconia theology and Bishop Káldy's dictatorial methods in the form of an open letter to the Federation's President and Executive Committee (see *RCL*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 98-102). Csengődy released a statement to the press highlighting the difficult circumstances of the late Bishop Ordass, who was accused of being a "counter-revolutionary" and became *persona non grata* within the church after his replacement by Káldy. In a circular letter issued at the beginning of 1984, Bishop Káldy had threatened pastors who proved troublesome during the Assembly with "administrative measures", but in the event he found these difficult to execute. The statements of Dóka and Csengődy were issued in the final days of Káldy's successful campaign for the presidency of the Lutheran World Federation. The

bishop made a dual response. On the one hand, he stated at a news conference that diaconia theology had the support of the vast majority of his pastors. On the other, he indicated a willingness to engage in a theological dialogue with his critics after the Assembly, noting that the exclusion of anyone "would reflect our poverty and fear".

Within weeks of the end of the Assembly, Dóka was suspended without pay, and subjected to attacks in the Hungarian Lutheran press. But Bishop Káldy felt it inadvisable to go through with the de-frocking proceedings that had been initiated against Dóka. The failure of the clergy to support anti-Dóka and pro-Káldy resolutions at compulsory deanery meetings, and pressure of Western Lutheran opinion, were factors which Káldy, as newly-elected President of the Lutheran World Federation, could not lightly ignore.

After the reinstatement of Dóka at the end of October 1984, both the leadership and its critics were content to allow the dust to settle. But after waiting more than a year for Káldy to initiate theological discussions, a group of reform-minded churchmen including Dóka met in the autumn of 1985 to analyse the theological basis of Lutheran church life, and to devise a programme for renewal which could serve as a basis for dialogue. "Our group," Dóka explained to Rolfe Bromme of the Church of Sweden Information Centre, "would like to be recognised as a physician who can treat the illness of the church. We are making a diagnosis and suggesting a treatment." In Dóka's view, the "illness" is due largely to the replacement of the Gospel at the centre of church life with diaconia theology. "Through diaconia theology," he claims,

the church authorities want to dictate to us the kind of action which Christians in Hungary should undertake and participate in. These are of a church-political and a general political character, both of which would serve the goals of the state . . . It means that ministers would be required to praise socialism from their pulpits . . . It was an attempt by the church authorities to impose on us a socio-ethical system — in fact a pro-socialist attitude . . . We, the ministers, were asked to endorse

socialist ideology in our churches through the vehicle of diaconia theology . . .

Dóka disclaims any intention of making a value judgement about "socialism as a political ideology". But he believes that Lutheran theology gives rise to no particular political system, and that the political implications of diaconia theology deprive Christians of the freedom of action provided for by the Gospel.

Bishop Nagy's initial public reaction to "A Brotherly Word" was conciliatory. In a June 16 interview with *Lutheran World Information*, he reported that "most of the practical and theological points mentioned by the critics were already included in the church leadership's programme". He also promised that discussions with the group would take place later in the month. However, he cautioned that the aim of the dialogue could not be "to call into question the whole theology of the church as it has unfolded during the past forty years."

On 20 July, State Secretary Imre Miklos, Chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs, publicly intervened in defence of the Lutheran leadership. Making an uncustomary appearance at the end of year ceremonies at the Lutheran seminary, Miklos charged that "a few clergymen in the Hungarian Lutheran Church . . . speak about the necessity of renewal in such a way as to threaten the unity of the church." In his view, "the renewal . . . has been underway for a long time." "We must," he continued, "work for renewal along the lines which our state and the Lutheran Church have together worked out over several decades." The Secretary of State suggested that "the few" were taking advantage of the lack of leadership caused by the long illness of Bishop Káldy. He expressed the hope that Káldy would soon return to his post, and made it clear that Nagy, as acting Presiding Bishop, had full authority to "ensure the unbroken service" of the church, thus dampening widespread rumours of an imminent change of leadership. Miklos warned the church that it could lose much if good church-state relations were not maintained. The construction of a new extension to the seminary building, Miklos said, was one of the plans of the church which must be realised by

“collectively listening to the heart and reason”.

Meanwhile, the meeting promised by Bishop Nagy took place on 23 June. Representing the church leadership were Károly Pröhle, Tibor Fabiny Sr — both professors at the Lutheran seminary — Dean Mihály Toth-Szölös and Dean Imre Szebik. From the reform group came laymen Drs Pál Gadó and Róbert Frenkl, and pastors Pál Zászkalicz and Gabor Itzész. No communiqué was issued after the meeting, although, according to one participant, there was agreement that “signs of crisis” were evident in church life, and that all churchmen should receive “identical” information about the meeting. But at the end of July Bishop Nagy released a statement in which he reaffirmed his acceptance of the majority of the reform group’s proposals, but rejected both the allegation of a “crisis of confidence” and the reformers’ “mistaken representation of diaconia theology and the role of the churches in Hungarian society”. The bishop also struck out against unspecified “Western church press organs” which had provided “biased commentary” about the life of his church, and against unnamed “individuals and groups” who wanted “to use the illness of Bishop Káldy to renew . . . accusations and attacks”.

On 2 September, Bishop Nagy reported to Keston College that a second meeting of representatives from both sides would take place later in the month. In view of the false starts since 1956 it is difficult to be very optimistic about the outcome of this latest attempt to initiate dialogue. The unwillingness of the state to relinquish its ultimate control of church life, or to tolerate theology or practical work which does not correspond to the party’s political analysis, leaves Lutheran leaders with little room for manoeuvre on key points of the reform group’s programme. This factor is compounded by the deep-seated passions and distrust which have accumulated in a highly polarised church over the past thirty years, and by the vital importance of face-saving to leaders in the Hungarian religious and political context. Yet, while the acceptance in practice by the Lutheran leadership of the better part of “A Brotherly Word” remains remote, there would appear to be some scope for the gradual implementation of moderate reform — for example, ecclesiastical decentralisation, greater lay participation, and the establishment of a Lutheran grammar school — without provoking a hostile and costly reaction from the state.

JOHN EIBNER

Augustin Navrátil.

One of several Catholic activists currently in detention in Czechoslovakia is Augustin Navrátil, a railway worker from Zlobice in Moravia. Navrátil’s case is unusual in that he is being held in the closed wing of a psychiatric hospital, rather than in an ordinary prison. However, this is in keeping with the authorities’ treatment of a man who for the past eight years or more has been a very vigorous campaigner on behalf of believers’ rights throughout the country.

Navrátil gained some prominence in 1968 when he served as a local councillor for the revived People’s Party under the regime of Alexander Dubček, but he first crossed swords with the authorities in 1977, when he was gathering signatures

for a petition for civil rights. He sent the petition to Cardinal Tomášek, who passed it on to the authorities. Navrátil was arrested on 27 January 1978, and after some delay was sent to a mental hospital for examination. His examiners pronounced him mentally unfit to stand trial. Their report describes him as suffering from “Hysterical self-stylisation towards the ideal of a strong leading personality and with a strong moral responsibility which the subject understands as ‘fidelity to his principles’ and an inability to adapt to an adequate view of social reality.” Furthermore, “. . . by analogy with the fate of past personalities, the subject thinks that for the truth, one must logically suffer.”

In the end, Navrátil was released from