

the fate of Czechoslovak Jews during the Second World War, including their important contribution to the Czechoslovak struggle, and why has there not yet been created a separate ghetto museum as was considered in the 1960s?

5) Why in 1970 was the permanent Czechoslovak exhibition at the State Polish Museum in Auschwitz 'reinstalled'? During this 'reinstallation' in a dubious and offensive attempt to conceal the fact that Czechoslovak citizens of mainly Jewish origin were imprisoned and killed here, its initiators went so far as to exclude from the exhibition the unique and terrible tragedy of the Theresienstadt family camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Now the many foreign visitors to the State Polish Museum are also badly informed or misinformed about the tragedy of Czechoslovak Jews under the Nazis.

6) What steps will be taken to ensure that school children, students and the Czechoslovak public are correctly informed of the fate of European and Czechoslovak Jews as the gravity and tragedy of their lot deserves?

7) What is the unembellished reality of the present religious and cultural life of the remaining Jews in Czechoslovakia? And what do the relevant institutions propose to do to put right this unsatisfactory situation? Lastly, is there not in Czechoslovakia an as yet hidden, official and politically motivated anti-Semitism as some of the above-described phenomena indicate?

Prague 5 April 1989  
Charter '77 Document No. 28

Signed by three Charter  
spokespersons.

## Church Life in Romania

*Churches, like other institutions in Ceausescu's Romania, are under strict government control and supervision. Amongst the measures which the government has taken to make life difficult for the churches are: restrictions on the number of those allowed to train for the priesthood; state control over the appointment of clergy; administrative obstacles to the building of new churches, espec-*

*ially in growing urban areas; censorship of religious publications; severe restrictions on the import of new religious literature and restrictions on contact between believers and their co-religionists abroad. The following documents shed some light on the life of religious groups in Romania and their varying responses to state policies.*

### The Romanian Reformed Church: Needs and Opportunities

*According to official statistics the Reformed Church in Romania has about 700,000 members, almost all of them from the country's Hungarian minority. There have long been protests from clergy and lay people*

*that the church leadership is too pliant with regard to the state, something which is seen as having a detrimental effect on the church's internal life. In 1988 a new samizdat publication, Kialto Szo (The Piercing Word) printed the following analysis of the life of the Romanian Reformed Church.*

The Reformed Church of Romania is divided into two church districts: the Kolozsvár (Cluj) district — (formerly called the Transylvanian district — with 400,000 members), and the Nagyvárad (Oradea) district — formerly called the Királyhagó district — which has 250,000 members). Yet even these figures, taken from official church statistics, suggest a problem in reconciling the two concepts in the sub-heading above. It is a justifiable requirement on the part of the church that it should know how many members it has. But the state census does not contain any question on religion, and the high levels of migration render church figures inaccurate. Furthermore given the lack of trained staff, it is impossible to keep a record of membership levels in town congregations.

Certainly the number of ethnic Hungarians in Romania who have some connection with the Reformed Church is significantly larger than the above figure, standing at an estimated 800-900,000. As my choice of words suggest, the level of religious activity among the church's members varies considerably.

The proportion of baptised Christians who have little contact with the church stands at 50-60 per cent. They look to the church as a kind of provider of services for the major events in life — birth, marriage, death. Generally they gladly welcome pastors or lay church workers on visits of a missionary nature or to strengthen the community. Laicisation now looms before pastors as a warning. The traditional forms of church service (e.g. Sunday worship in church) do not draw the mass of potential church members. Hence new methods are absolutely essential: bible classes for the different age-groups, choirs or even youth singing groups with guitars, home prayers combined with family visits, visiting the sick, and so forth. In these ways

the joyful message of the Word can be spread more widely, and a broader range of people can be formed into active communities. There are no significant obstacles to putting these into practice; it depends merely on the pastors' zeal, faith, and willingness to make sacrifices. The variation in how far Reformed congregations implement these new methods is considerable.

We find bustling church life where pastors work both old and new forms into community activities. Congregations whose ministers approach their work like bureaucrats and restrict themselves to carrying out only obligatory services are communities in name alone.

Relations between congregations and the church authorities, and between pastors and deans and bishops differ significantly in the two church districts. László Papp, bishop of Nagyvárad, is opposed in principle to the new forms of church activity, and strictly forbids what he considers to be 'pietist' deviations. Under his autocratic style of leadership even services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are prohibited. Still less is there any chance of regular Bible classes to stimulate believers. Pastors taking active steps to revive the faith are normally punished by transferal and other methods.

The situation in the Kolozsvár district is normal by comparison. Bishop Gyula Nagy does not encourage active pastors, but neither does he punish them. The first type of behaviour, as displayed by Bishop Papp, is preferred by a communist state founded on atheist ideology, but the second type is tolerated. This serves as a serious reminder that the Reformed Church does not make full use of the possibilities presented by the state.

In some areas of church life, the needs of believers, pastors, and the church hierarchy coincide; however

the state severely obstructs the fulfilment of those needs. One example is the need to replace retired or deceased pastors, which by the 1980s had become a most depressing aspect of church life. In the 1980-81 academic year the State Department for Religious Affairs drastically reduced the number of students who could enrol in the Protestant Theological Institute, and the situation has remained as follows: ten Reformed students (eight from the Kolozsvár district, two from the Nagyvárad, two Unitarian, and one Lutheran). In the 1978-79 year the total number of Protestant students was 162. By 1984-85 this number had been cut to 51. The church leadership's none too energetic efforts to remedy the situation have proved fruitless.

In comparison to the West or to Hungary, the shortage of priests is not yet that great: ten to 15 per cent of posts are vacant. The emphasis here is on the word 'yet'; for even immediate action, of which there is little hope, would not be able to halt the deteriorating situation. One new phenomenon contributing to this mounting shortage is the sad fact that Reformed pastors are among the mass of refugees heading for Hungary and the West. It is the scattered Reformed communities that suffer most from these developments, since it is the posts covering many small communities that remain empty.

Paradoxically the congregations in the larger towns of the Nagyvárad district serve as a reminder that the latent shortage of pastors far exceeds the number of vacant posts. For here the process of urbanisation has vastly swelled the membership of the congregations. However they are prohibited by the bishop from dividing up into smaller congregations. The number of congregations still stands at its 1945 figure, while the number of believers grows; 10-15,000 believers are 'cared for' by one pastor. In the

Kolozsvár district the four communities that existed in 1945 have grown to 11 today, each with 4-5,000 members, a manageable size.

The formation of new communities leads to the question of building new churches, where needs and opportunities stand in direct conflict with each other. The state accepts the establishment of new congregations in towns, but permission for the construction of new church buildings (churches or pastoral accommodation) is rarely given, or only after long delays. Believers in new housing estates crowd into the narrow confines of a family flat converted into a place of worship. However great the sacrifices they make, there is little hope of their building anything more suitable for prayer. Village congregations are in a better position in so far as they all have churches. The problems here lie in the maintenance and repair of the buildings. Believers need the repairs and would willingly bear the costs, often extremely high; but the state rarely gives permission for repairs to go ahead. Therefore the work is done illegally, with the constant risk of being caught.

Since space is short, let us touch on one more aspect of the life of the Reformed Church: the church press. Church members can hardly imagine a well-run church publishing house. Their needs are minimal: all they want are Bibles, hymnbooks and Heidelberg catechisms. Yet the distribution of literature is not sufficient even to meet these modest needs.

It has to be stated that it is not the bishops that sabotage publishing; the situation has been created by the state's policies towards the churches. There is no import permit for Bibles (the Kolozsvár district last received Bibles in 1980, a batch of 10,000). The bishops are allowed to print an ever diminishing number of hymnbooks and catechisms.

The demand for a community-building weekly paper addressing Reformed believers would be great, but such publications have been out of the question since the Second World War. Theological works have been printed by the publishing house

of the Kolozsvár district since the beginning of the eighties, but the rumour is that even these will be cut in number.

*Kialto Szo*

#### The *Ex-lex* Situation in the Reformed Church of Transylvania

*István Tőkés is a well-known figure in the Reformed Church of Romania. Once a lecturer at the Protestant Academy in Cluj (Kolozsvár) and a Deputy Bishop, he was dismissed from the former post in 1983 and the latter in 1984 as a result of his criticisms of the cooperation of the church leadership with the anti-church measures of the state authorities. In this letter which reached the West in August 1988 he renews his call for the church to follow its own constitution, and suggests that only in this way can state control be resisted. Since writing this letter the 72-year-old theologian has encountered further difficulties: just before Pentecost this year he was banned from preaching in his own town of Cluj.*

One can justly pose the question whether the harsh phraseology of the title can be used or not, with regard to the Reformed Church (reformed according to the Word of God).

The question is completely justified. Under normal circumstances the answer should be an unequivocal 'no'. In a normally functioning church every problem that arises (even when they seem to be most difficult) should be brought before the competent bodies in order to find a solution corresponding to church law. However, when this canonical procedure cannot be followed because of the arbitrary attitude of a decadent church leadership, when the relevant

people in authority cut out completely the legitimate bodies or mislead them with lies, then the 'ex-lex situation' [extra-legal, *Ed.*] is confirmed unmistakably, and must be brought before the wider public. This action is part of the act of obedience of those servants of the Gospel who, as a result of their calling, put themselves under the sovereign authority of the one and only Head of the Church, and wish to take on themselves the burden of their action.

Now in the present circumstances of the Reformed Church of Transylvania it should be declared without reservation that the brutal arbitrary behaviour of the leading figures (Bishop Gyula Nagy, Lay President Gyula Csapo Tunyogi, Consistorial Council member Károly Székely, and others), and the various abuses on the part of the bureaucracy have reached such a point over many years that the words of the prophets can no longer be silenced: the Lord of the Vineyard 'is hoping for judgement, and sees the breaking of the law'.

The question arises — what should we do? The answer to which duty leads us springs from the sources of the Gospel: repent and join in prayer, prepare yourself and make ready to do anything possible for the establishment of a just church order. The congregations will survive in any case but, under the dominion of Christ, the 'how' of honesty and legality should not be neglected. For this reason the holding of a session of the synod is necessary, where in free discussion and with the exclusion of the relevant powers that be (the

bishops, etc.) the serious problems of the 'Deformation-Reformation' can be examined. The goal is clear: to put an end to the disorder, the many instances of corruption and self-deceit. These include:

the lack of normally functioning bodies (synods, general gatherings, the editorial commission, etc.) and the puppet-like bodies which do in fact seem to exist, but which are really only the blind tools of the powers that be;

the lack of any leading figure who on the basis of his legitimate calling is able to act legitimately;

the lack of freedom in church elections, which are rigged so that the will of the electors cannot be realised;

the lack of a legitimate (canonical) filling of pastoral posts, which as occasion demands is subject to the despotism of the leadership or the bishops;

the lack of real control over the central bureaucracy, which is able to give a completely false picture of the situation of the church (the number of congregations, the vacant benefices, the number of pastors and theological students, etc.);

the lack of freedom to preach the Gospel;

the lack of a canonical, disciplined church order;

the lack of legitimate regulations (i.e. worked out by the synod for the theological faculty);

the lack of canonical, ecumenical activity and missionary work in the church;

the lack of evangelical brotherhood among the pastors, who live in the shadow of the unbearable cult of personality of the 'bishop';

the lack of opportunity to practise a healthy theological critique, which would point up the many-

sided falsification of contemporary church history and the deteriorated state of the 'Reformed Church of Transylvania', a matter which could and should be brought before the public; (not only is the lack of critique characteristic of the prevailing conditions, but those people who wish to carry out their duty could have their office removed on the ground of lies and false accusations by the arbitrary action of the bishop);

the lack, in general, of any opportunity to develop that evangelical spirit for which Christian obedience is more important than various factors of 'church' and secular opportunism, which can be characterised by the words of the Lord: 'they will drive you out of the synagogue; indeed the hour is coming when anybody who kills you will believe he is presenting a sacrifice to God' (John 16:2).

The time for calling such a synod and the working out of a radical, new church order, in which the current office of bishop and similar anomalies will not be found, should not be put off indefinitely. Only this way can the serious illness of the organised church be healed and progress along the narrow path of recovery be assured. Constant readiness to repent (in place of the empty ostentation and distortion) and recognition and acceptance of the leading of the Holy Spirit of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church, is the only solution for the renewal of the Transylvanian Corpus Christi.

'Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches' and to all those in authority.

*Professor István Tökés.*

## The Letter of the Nineteen

*The Latin-rite Roman Catholic Church in Romania is made up mainly of Hungarians and Germans, with a minority of Romanians, who are mainly found in Moldavia. Since the death in 1980 of the Bishop of Alba Iulia, Áron Márton, the Catholic Church has been without a powerful independent voice. In August 1988 19 Transylvanian priests — all ethnic Hungarians — addressed a letter to Marton's successor, Bishop Antal Jakab, asking him to raise their concerns with the relevant state authorities. The letter was made public only after the bishop was forced by the state to cancel a Mass due to be held in Cluj in February 1989 to honour the 50th anniversary of the consecration of Bishop Márton.*

## Praise be to Jesus Christ

Our most honourable and respected Bishop and Father.

The members of this diocese usually gather together in significant numbers on certain traditional occasions — priests' funerals, festive celebrations and spiritual exercises. It is perfectly natural that such meetings serve as occasions for discussing contemporary questions facing the church.

In recent times it has been made uniformly clear that there is great consternation and anxiety, even despair among the faithful because of many measures of the authorities which directly or indirectly restrict religious life. What is more, they make church life impossible for the ever-growing number of believers.

The view has been formulated at these occasional discussions that the priesthood cannot remain dumb and inactive when confronted with the anxiety of the faithful, if only because it does not want to take upon

itself the prophetic accusation of 'dumb dogs' (Isaiah 56:10-11).

The thought was expressed that the whole priesthood should present a memorandum to the competent secular authorities via the episcopate. Finally, after due consideration, the assembled priests thought it would be appropriate if those members of the Diocesan Senate of Priests who work among the believers and the deans who represent the entire clergy before the Honourable Diocesan Authority should reveal the situation. Below we have drawn together — without a claim to comprehensiveness — the most burning issues that disturb the faithful and the clergy alike and the reasons for their unease and anxiety.

I. It is common knowledge that the faithful are adamant that their church communities should not be left without priests. They therefore consider as catastrophic those extra-legal measures which, by restricting the number of those able to enrol [in seminary, *Ed.*] have in recent years violated the guarantees for filling empty parishes. These measures endanger the future of the church.

II. As a result of rapid development and the large-scale shift of population from rural to urban areas, the old churches in the cities are insufficient to accommodate the faithful. The recently built urban districts are without churches. Though the faithful would readily provide the material needs, it is not possible to build new churches. The makeshift chapels and private homes which here and there have been allowed do not satisfy the need.

III. The lack of churches will become increasingly manifest when the planned agro-industrial complexes become a reality. . . The capacity will be insufficient for the swollen population of these village centres. At the same time churches

of unparalleled artistic value, some 700-800 years old, remain derelict to the great sorrow of the faithful.

IV. Since the Second World War the complete text of the Bible has never reached the hands of believers. Though the New Testament, prayer books and catechisms have occasionally appeared in limited numbers, the demand has hardly been satisfied. The church cannot even try to publish other books and periodicals.

V. The satisfaction of the religious requirements of the faithful is made difficult by the fact that many young people cannot begin to read or write in their mother tongue. As a result of this they would not be able to read religious publications easily and profitably even if there were sufficient. What has produced this situation is the fact that fewer and fewer classes carry out education in the mother tongue. And when parents do not take advantage of the available opportunities it is because they are worried for the future of their children.

VI. It has begun to be general practice that graduates of colleges and universities receive job opportunities in regions far from their place of birth. Thus they become separated from religious communities. . . More recently it has seemed that the same fate awaits young people graduating from secondary and technical schools. Moreover they have no chance later of returning to the region of their own religion and family because vacancies have been filled by competitors directed there from other regions.

VII. As young people are systematically transferred away from their home region, there is a steady increase in the number of families deprived of the possibility of help from parents and grandparents,

especially in bringing up children. As a result many couples wait for years before having children. . .

VIII. . . . It is not rare in these circumstances for the family life of married couples to disintegrate and to end in divorce. This is a great tragedy from both the religious and social viewpoint, because the family is the nucleus of society.

IX. Discrimination against believers in scholarly, artistic and public life causes dissatisfaction and displeasure amongst the faithful. There are quite a few who, since their student days, have cut themselves off from religious practice, though not from conviction, and have deprived themselves of the source of morality which springs from religion, and which — as is the case worldwide — cannot be substituted with another in the upbringing and shaping of the future generation.

The clergy believe it important that the anxiety and embitterment of the faithful should be conveyed to the highest levels of state and, at the same time, that the state should be made aware of the reasons for these feelings.

We must believe that there is no knowledge at the highest levels of state about the embitterment that is evident in broad sections of society because of the phenomena enumerated above.

Every citizen has an equal right to practise religion freely and enjoys rights regarding religion, according to the fundamental law of the state — the constitution, the law regarding the operation of religious denominations, and international agreements on human rights. But much is wanting and there are obstacles to the application and execution of these rights. These anomalies, so it seems, are unknown at the highest levels, and even less is known about the worries of broad sections of the

population, because the local authorities produce only favourable reports. This situation is made worse by the fact that the population itself is rarely inclined to reveal things frankly to the local authorities because they fear the consequences.

The seriousness of the situation cannot be better illustrated than by pointing to the fact that many seek a remedy abroad. Some do so legally, but many remain abroad without permission.

We regard the disclosure of the above as our obligation. We believe that by so doing we are performing a public service because the revelation

of truth and, in recognition of that, the hopeful curing of wounds, can only benefit society.

With deep respect we ask the bishop, our father, to consider what kind of steps can be taken to make known at the highest level the increasing dissatisfaction and embitterment of the faithful. We cannot know if such a step will bring results, but we would love to believe that it will not be in vain.

One certainty remains before us: it will have greater weight in the realm of consciousness and will sooner or later produce its fruit.

#### A Letter to the Pope

*The Eastern-rite Catholic Church established in 1698 has always encountered hostility from the Romanian Orthodox Church. After the communist takeover, and following the example of the Soviet Union, the church was forcibly merged with the Orthodox Church in 1948. Yet as in Ukraine, Uniate communities in Romania have continued to exist in secret, and today there are believed to be about 600 priests who continue their pastoral work while holding full-time secular jobs. Some Uniate believers attend Latin-rite churches though this has led to tensions because Hungarian or German, not Romanian, is the liturgical language of most Latin-rite churches in Transylvania, the historical stronghold of the Uniates. One bishop of the Eastern-rite church, Bishop Todea, who lives in Reghin, is known to carry out pastoral work in spite of the illegality of the church, and he is reported to oversee the activities of several hundred priests who have to say Mass in private homes.*

*Although the Romanian secret police, the Securitate keep a watchful*

*eye on active Uniates, this has not prevented some from publicly demanding the relegalisation of their church. Prominent Romanian dissident Doina Cornea is a member of the Eastern-rite Catholic Church and has spoken up in its defence. In September 1988 she and a group of fellow believers wrote the following letter to Pope John Paul II.*

These lines are addressed to your Holiness by a group of Catholics of the Eastern-rite from Romania.

Despite official statements made by the Romanian authorities which claim that there are no longer any Catholics of the Eastern-rite in Romania, we insist on reaffirming our existence to the Holy See and to the whole world. At the same time we appeal to your Holiness for support in preserving the Eastern-rite Catholic Church in Romania and reestablishing its rights.

It is almost superfluous to recall that the brutal liquidation of this church in 1948 cost the lives and freedom of thousands of believers and priests; it was a grave violation of the constitution and the rights of man, with disastrous spiritual and

cultural results for the Romanian people as a whole. After all, the important role played by this church in forming our spiritual outlook, especially in Transylvania, is well known. . .

Since 1700 we have lived out our Catholic faith by following the Eastern, Byzantine rite. It is in this rite that, for almost three centuries, our priests have prayed and made spiritual offerings at moments of great historical distress. Our Eastern-rite Catholic Church has carried out a mission of considerable significance in the field of national culture and history: it has recorded the fate of our people; it contributed to our national revival through its schools and cultural institutions. We feel closely linked to this church, as it has given us countless benefits.

To go over to the Latin-rite, as the Romanian state authorities wish, after three centuries rooted in the Byzantine traditions, would mean denying ourselves. At the same time it would be a betrayal of the holy lives of our seven bishops who died as martyrs for the faith in communist prisons. Their example urges us not to be deceived, by letting ourselves be enticed by certain alluring, apparently beneficial concessions made to the church as a whole by state leaders. The generous 'concession' permitting the Latin-rite in the Romanian language in Transylvania is in fact no more than a manoeuvre designed to eliminate the Eastern-rite Catholic Church completely — a church which for 40 years has been living in secret, in the catacombs.

Why is the power of the state turned relentlessly against our united church? . . . The state wishes to tear us away from that church because, in its struggle for religious and cultural freedoms in Transylvania in the 18th and 19th centuries, and at the

beginning of the 20th century, it has given us a variety of human examples to follow, dazzling in the light of their faith, full of courage and dignity, and devoted to liberty. . .

By deceiving the faithful they are trying, moreover, to strike a treacherous blow at Catholicism as a whole. In fact, if these deceitful propositions made by the state authorities were to be accepted, the Catholic Church would lose about a million believers. These would be former Uniates in rural areas who would be assimilated into the Orthodox Church by the force of circumstance. These Christians. . . these same churches would be lost, together with all the property attached to the parishes, as would the cultural institutions founded by the Eastern-rite church, its ancient monastic establishments etc. All this in exchange for a few thousand Romanian Catholic believers from the urban centres, where there are already centuries-old Roman Catholic churches which belong to the Hungarian speaking believers. As Romanian Uniates, we do not want to intrude, disturb the peace or cause disorder in these churches, which belong by right to our Hungarian brethren in the faith.

We ask that the Eastern-rite Catholic Church be given back all its rights, that its property be restored and that its spiritual, cultural and historical talents, acquired over three centuries of a troubled existence, be recognised. . .

With our deepest respect and gratitude,

*Doina Cornea*

*Elvira Paian*

*Dr Leontin Iukas*

*Puiu Neamtu*

*Cluj, September 1988.*

## A Letter to Ceausescu

*For many years the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church has shown a degree of subservience to the state authorities unrivalled by the leaders of any other church in Romania. The document below provides a recent example of this attitude. The Holy Synod's paeon of praise to the Romanian president contrasts sharply with the condemnation his regime has received from human rights organisations in both East and West. In return for political cooperation, the Romanian Orthodox Church has a privileged position compared to other denominations.*

The members of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which met on 30 March 1989 to mark the opening of the year's working session, join with the community of priests and believers in complete unity of thought and action to express their special feelings of deep respect and far-reaching esteem for you, deeply respected President Nicolae Ceausescu, great leader of the nation, creator of modern Romania, and tireless flagbearer of world peace, and of understanding and cooperation between men and peoples.

Expressing our appreciation on the 15th anniversary of the day — 28 March 1974 — on which you were chosen at the behest of the whole nation for the highest state office and became Romania's first president, we ask you to accept our warmest and deeply felt thanks for your personal and constant concern for the unending growth of the country's economic strength, the multi-faceted development of the homeland, the conquest of the high peaks of progress and civilisation, the unending rise in the people's material and intellectual living standards, which take concrete form in the increase in salaries and pensions that millions of workers

have enjoyed and in the comprehensive construction programmes of housing and social-cultural establishments which bear eloquent witness to the humanism that characterises contemporary Romania. . .

We also wholly approve of the ardent activity which you, as the greatest and most brilliant hero of peace and tireless fighter for understanding and peaceful collaboration, wage for the victory of mankind's ideals of freedom and progress, and for complete equality in law, respect for national independence and sovereignty, and for the development of the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, i.e. those principles which Romania consistently and determinedly applies to its relations with all the states of the world.

With profound gratitude for your efforts in the cause of the Romanian people's happiness and of world peace, with the greatest reverence, we give our warmest thanks for the atmosphere of complete religious freedom which you have ensured for the religious groups of our homeland, and for your far-reaching understanding towards the Orthodox Church and all believers in the practice of religion and culture.

We wish to seize this opportunity, deeply respected President Nicolae Ceausescu, to assure you that inspired by their deep feelings of patriotic pride in the shining future opening before the magnificent achievements of the people and the progress of society, and mobilised by your call and the example of your life and work, the Romanian Orthodox Church will work with the people devotedly and self-sacrificingly, to assist the never ending rise and ever greater success among all nations of the world of our dear homeland, the Socialist Republic of Romania.

*Elöre*

2 April 1989