

LÁSZLÓ TŐKÉS

IN THE SPIRIT OF TIMIȘORA

Ecumenia and Reconciliation

Edited
by the Reformed Church District of “Királyhágómellék”

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Stubborn and patient in the interests of reconciliation

Only a pit donkey or a man strong in faith is able to remain true to his path, even if his goal is clouded in fog. It is an animal's natural instinct, and a man's faith which gives him the strength to carry on, until light triumphs over darkness.

It is this faith which gave strength to all of us who rose up against communism when almost everyone considered opposition to be futile. It is this faith which has kept alive the flame in the time since it became clear that with the fall in regime, the substance stayed the same, and only the form changed.

In these changed circumstances, the struggle for freedom of the intellect and the spirit remains.

Because it is the liberated intellect and the unrestrained spirit which is capable of giving and receiving, ready for patience, and prepared for love. Literally: he who is frightened is not a democrat. We must adapt our fellow man and our fellow nations to ecumenism - into that universality in which difference, and the respect of the others otherness is the greatest bond.

Since Christmas 1989, the struggle for reconciliation between races and nations in the public life of the Christian Churches of Romania has been exemplary. Exemplary in the search for relations between Catholic and Protestant brothers, as, both lacking in strength individually, together they are able to bear the burden.

Today, as in the years in which saw an orgy of fascism and nazism, man and the churches not pottering about in the labyrinth of politics but following the path of truth. It was on this road that I met the Bishop of Oradea (Nagyvárad) József Tempfli in his flowing cassock. I was able to follow a part of this narrow way through the Székely lands with László Tőkés, who proved before man and God that those who follow the path of righteousness will reach the truth.

What could be more important for a central Europe freed from Communism, than cleaning from our souls and spirits from the choking dirt which the last decade of this century has deposited on us.

The dirt under which subconscious hatred glows white hot.

It is alarming how the instigation of induced hatred the stamp of collective sin, and the sign of collective exclusiveness can set peoples against one another. Those who live with a collective stigma reject collective rights: deprivation of rights - yes, rights - no.

It often seems that the two thousand years of Christian history, culture and spiritual development have disappeared without a trace that part of Europe, in which the Hungarians live. For this reason, we need the blind patience of the pit-donkey to see us through, and a deep faith to prevent us from becoming fatally sinful and mediocre, or from caving in under the heavy burden.

These documents, which typify the struggle of the Hungarian Christian churches of the Partium and Transylvania over the past six years, testify to three facts in this regard: to the protection of Christ's pure faith, to the struggle for the legal liberation and equality of the Hungarian community, and to the love shown towards our fellow nations in our broken homelands, despite the hatred they often show in return. This triple theological and philosophical unity contains an unequivocal message to politics: only a relationship of equality between the Hungarians and the Romanians (the Hungarians and the Slovaks, etc.)

can provide the solution. The only form for this solution can be legal guarantees of the rights and autonomous status of autonomous communities made up of autonomous individuals.

If we are to reach the goal hidden to so many by fog, the search for the truth which dispels the fog and the unshakeable conviction of the believer that the problems must be named is essential. Defining exactly and bluntly the situation which torments our existence. Straight-forwardness and precise definition run through this collection of documents and studies, the author of a large part of which is László Tőkés. He knows that to forget will only make matters worse.

As I read from end to end this collection, which is neither heartening nor light reading, a picture flashed through my mind: what would happen if great international political interests were linked to our plight? They would be quoting the hero writer of such a volume in Oslo, as they presented him with the Nobel Prize. But why just him? The patience with which the Hungarian communities cut off since 1918 have borne their fate, would already have earned several prizes. The proof of this patience and strength in faith is the documents and writings collected together in this volume. These and their author himself, László Tőkés.

Miklós Duray

Being still unshakeable

“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). Maybe, these Words characterise most appropriately the consistent upholding of the banner of reconciliation between peoples and denominations, between Romanians and Hungarians, through the work of Bishop László Tőkés, the Honorary President of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania.

This anthology comprises the speeches, documents and essays of the past seven years, which are distinguished by their committed and faithful analysis of the situation in Romania, the Romanian-Hungarian inter-ethnic and denominational relationship, which are also important parts of the political struggle, started with the popular uprising in Timisoara/Temesvár and developed in this spirit, for the sake of the rights of the minority Hungarians as well as national and religious reconciliation.

Not lastly, by the example and public service of László Tőkés, Timisoara has become a lasting symbol and a living history.

The Editor

Churches and inter-ethnic reconciliation

Since the changes of 1989, inter-ethnic antagonism has become unexpectedly strong and widespread in our region. This is true also in Romania.

We are also well aware that churches can exacerbate such differences. We need to look no further than the conflict between the Orthodox Serbs and the Roman Catholic Croats for confirmation of this. Nevertheless, churches can and do play an important role in inter-ethnic reconciliation. Our church, the Reformed Church in Romania, being convinced that inter-ethnic reconciliation is vital to our country's democratisation and to a wider reconciliation within our society, has chosen this latter path.

Since the changes which began three years ago, the Hungarian Churches in Romania have co-operated closely in working towards social and inter-ethnic peace. The institutional framework, specific to this service, comprises:

1. The Alliance of Hungarian Christian Churches in Romania, which builds links from below and
2. The high-level, Permanent Conference of Hungarian Christian Church Leaders in Romania

Both these bodies work with the active participation of representatives of the Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Unitarian, and Baptist Churches.

We also work to create better relations with the churches traditional to the other ethnic groups in Romania. Within one year of the changes which swept our country, on 4th and 5th November 1990, a Meeting of Reconciliation took place in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia between the leaders of the ethnic Romanian and Hungarian churches from both Hungary and Romania. The Meeting of Reconciliation was organised within the framework of the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

As early as May 1990, the Directory Council of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District and its College of Deans had begun to call for a high level ecumenical meeting between the leaders of all the legally recognised denominations and churches in Romania. The Hungarian Christian Church Leaders in Romania accepted this proposal and reaffirmed it at their conference of 15th October 1990. The Romanian Orthodox Church also accepted the invitation and we began preparations for the meeting.

The Conferences of Reconciliation, which our church organises to commemorate the anniversary of the Timișoara Revolution, have become almost a tradition. On 15th and 16th December 1990, with the participation of representatives from the churches of Central and Eastern Europe, and on 13th-15th December 1991, with the participation of the Hungarian-Romanian Friendship Societies, together with numerous church and lay personalities, we held our annual commemoration service and inter-ethnic gathering in Timișoara. On both these occasions, Dr Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of the Banat; Dr Sebastian Kräuter, Roman Catholic Bishop; Pastor Petru Dugulescu, Baptist Minister; and Dr Ernest Neumann, Chief Rabbi of Timișoara were active participants.

In the autumn of 1991, the Hungarian Christian Churches in Romania, together with the Alliance of Democratic Hungarians in Romania, held an extra-ordinary ecumenical service in Saint Michael's Church, Cluj, to remember the victims of the holocaust and to further the cause of Christian-Jewish reconciliation. Dr Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of Romania took part in this service.

At the meeting of the Permanent Conference of Hungarian Christian Church Leaders in Romania which took place in Cluj on 15th October 1991, a motion was passed to begin the process towards a national round table meeting of consensus and reconciliation between Hungarians and Romanians, involving representatives of all the Romanian churches.

On 20th September 1991, on the occasion of the Ecumenical Service of Worship held in Saint Stephen's Cathedral, Budapest, the member churches of the Hungarian Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, together with the Romanian Reformed and Roman Catholic Churches, began to organise an international ecumenical meeting at the request of the European church organisations (i.e. WCC, CEC) and the Conference of European Bishops.

At my instigation, on 8th May 1992, an ecumenical service and meeting in Hungarian and Romanian took place in the main square of Miercurea Ciuc in which some 20-30,000 people took part. On this occasion, as on the occasion of the Kecskemét ecumenical service in aid of the disabled, Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu's personal representative took part.

Most recently, on 11th September 1992, I sent an offer of peace, and suggested a meeting of reconciliation to the village of Hodac whose people were incited by wickedly organised provocation to take part in inter-ethnic conflict in Târgu Mures. I asked certain Orthodox leaders for their support of this project.

Looking back over the past two or three years, I can recall these efforts at reconciliation, among others. Unfortunately, the fruit of this work has in most cases not met our expectations. These minority - Hungarian - initiatives have remained, in most cases, one sided good intentions. Apart from rare, exceptional, and occasional gestures, they have not been reciprocated by the majority - Romanian - churches.

We are convinced that the Romanian Orthodox Church needs, above all, to unequivocally and openly condemn extremist national incitement and the dominance of nationalism in politics, which are deeply hurtful, not just to the minorities, but equally to Romania and to its democratic development.

9 November 1992, Oradea

Evangelical Appeal

to the leaders of Romania's Religious Denominations

“Test everything. Hold onto the good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Grave problems face the society and citizens of our common homeland. A deepening and multi-faceted crisis threatens them. We have far to go before we can escape our discreditable past.

Our homeland, the land in which we live, “the Lord, our God has given us” (5th Commandment), its inhabitants are the children of God's chosen people. Our faith obliges us to love our homeland, and feel responsibility to its people and society. We cannot pass our country's problems by on the other side, as the priest and the levite did in the parable of the good Samaritan. Our churches' God's given mission in this world, compels us to words and action.

For the sake of our homeland's renewal, and the deliverance of the December Revolution and in order to carry out the principles and noble aims upon which it was based, I repeat the brotherly appeal for a national ecumenical meeting, which I made at the start of the year. I am convinced that in accordance with God's will, a nation-wide and noble battle - in the Biblical sense - we can be the “yeast” in the continuing extraordinarily difficult and complicated circumstances. The renewal of both our homeland and our churches, requires responsible dialogue and unity between us.

To pay tribute to the events of last Advent and Christmas, and to the memory of our heroic martyrs, I suggest that the meeting take place in the middle of December this year. I enclose my initial invitation to the representatives of all our sister denominations in Romania in the name of the hosts, the Királyhágómellék, Oradea Reformed Church District.

Ecumenical Appeal

to the Churches of Austria, Hungary, Romania, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia on the Subject of Inter-ethnic Reconciliation in Central and Eastern Europe

The question of national identity is one of the most pressing problems to face our countries and our region. The peace of Central and Eastern Europe and even of the whole Continent may still be threatened by drawn out ethnic conflicts whose origins lie buried deep in history. Such conflicts obstruct the social and political development of our countries and the establishment of peaceful relations between them.

More and more people are beginning to realise that reconciliation between the nationalities and peoples living here is urgently necessary as the only real alternative for our peoples' and our countries' development and integration into a united Europe.

The colourful ethnic jigsaw that makes up the Danube valley is matched by equally colourful religious/denominational divisions among the area's inhabitants. In general, our peoples' religious identity is closely intertwined with their national or ethnic status: in the same way that religion and ethnicity were synonymous for the peoples of the Old Testament. The traditional churches have almost without exception played a significant part in the process by which these peoples became nations. The two concepts of "natio" and "religio" are inseparably fused, one with the other.

It is with this sincere and loving message that I address the most reverend leadership of the church regarding the role and responsibilities of the churches in Central and Eastern Europe: Be more united than ever with the other churches of this ethnically divided region, be instrumental in and encourage the triumph of reconciliation between our peoples and nations.

Our Lord created us all as his children and taught us to love and understand each other in the language of Pentecost, since "we are all members of one body" in Christ (Eph. 4:25).

In the spirit of the Gospel, and with the aim of inter ethnic reconciliation in mind, I would like to make this appeal with an added invitation. In my own name, and in that of the "Királyhágómellék" Reformed Church Bishopric in Oradea, I would like to invite you, the leaders of our churches or your representatives, to take part in an ecumenical meeting and service of commemoration to mark the first anniversary of the Romanian Revolution. The meeting will take place in Timisoara on 14-15 December.

Romania's ethnically diverse Transylvania and the "martyr city" Timișoara, which overcame differences of nation and religion, would provide a fitting home for our struggle for confessional and ethnic unity.

May God Bless Our Church,

With the respect of a fellow servant and the love of a brother.

22 October 1990, Oradea

Fraternal Message

**to the leaders of the Romanian and Hungarian Churches gathered under
the auspices of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) at Novi Sad
to discuss reconciliation between our two nations**

(4-6 November 1990)

It is with joy and thanks to God that I learnt of the Conference of European Churches' (CEC) remarkable initiative which, with the participation of the Romanian and Hungarian churches, strives to push forward reconciliation between the two nations. In my opinion, the CEC has reacted to the grave national problems brought about by the fundamental changes taking place in our region with the necessary Christian sensitivity. In contrast with the CEC's former policy of passive, submissive and impartial behaviour - no doubt the result of unfamiliarity - it has hastened to help us with exemplary commitment.

I am extremely sorry that because of my illness I am unable to participate at this conference. However, we have taken special care that the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District is not absent from the meeting, and that the Hungarian speaking Reformed Church in Romania should play her part in the common work towards reconciliation.

May I draw your attention to the fact that last May, in the spirit of the spontaneous ecumenical unity which characterised the revolution in Timisoara, I called on all the legally recognised religious denominations in Romania to hold a national ecumenical meeting to try and achieve unity in the cause of our country's advancement and social reconciliation. This call met with more or less no response, and so last month I repeated it, suggesting that a nation-wide ecumenical meeting be held on the December anniversary of the Romanian Revolution.

More than this, I would also like to mention that our church district has always been committed to seeking opportunities for peace-making dialogue, and - despite the situation described above - we responded promptly to the invitation that the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan of Sibiu made to certain churches in October.

Allow me to quote a passage of scripture which I believe defines the base of principle and theology upon which ecumenical dialogue, and our continuing efforts and discussions to create national reconciliation and a closer relationship between our churches can be built. These words are also an important part of the Reformed Church's Heidelberg Confession: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:22-25)

The Heidelberg Catechism puts it even more "radically" and says: "kill" the old man and be renewed "as a new man".

I feel this requirement of the Bible and the Confession is an important preliminary condition for the renewal of our ecumenical relationships and also for Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

The official hierarchies of our churches, both Reformed and Orthodox, made sinful compromises with the political authorities, degrading Christ's free church into a mere state church. They systematically integrated into the church and faith ruining atheist political

system. Through their reticence and false “ecumenical” propaganda they obtained the tacit support of the International Ecumenical Movement, for this process.

Radical change in this area has not occurred even since December’s changes in Romania. At least in the sense that so far the churches concerned have still not brought the sinful and false practice of the past to a public and conclusive end. Nor have they passed any sort of real judgement on themselves or the overthrown dictatorship; instead they continue their activities as if nothing has happened and everything is in order.

Ecumenism cannot however, with pious phraseology, continue where it left off in the old regime. Under that regime, we preached peace and love, and announced to the world that we live in “real freedom of religion”. If now we do the same, what will give our preaching, our confessions and our new promises any legitimacy? We made no protest at either the oppression of the Romanian people or against the eradication of the minorities - those churches which said not one word about the events of Târgu-Mures in March or of Bucharest in June, and remain silent on the press campaign being mounted against the Hungarian minority and the democratic opposition, are still doing exactly the same.

We must shrug off the behaviour and acts of the old self. We must make a definite stand against the sins of the past and the present by “shrugging off falsehood and to speak truthfully”. If this does not happen, all Ecumenical initiatives will remain mere window-dressing and delusion suffocating in false verbalism. If so, they will not bring real reconciliation into our divided Romanian society, nor into the much deteriorated Romanian-Hungarian relationship.

We need therefore to reconsider our past in the spirit of the Gospel, to condemn the sins of our past, and to express openly our outlook on the future.

Moreover, a public statement by the majority Orthodox Church on the theme of discriminative policy against the ethnic minorities, and in respect of their future individual and collective rights seems to be necessary. Since we are all members of one body in Christ, who should the minority, diaspora churches expect effective support from, other than their larger sister churches?

The Orthodox Church, whose voice is accepted by a wide section of the Romanian nation, could contribute decisively to ending the recent spate of artificially inspired ethnic hatred.

I believe that we must place our national and international ecumenical relations on a new foundation, by confessing the sins of the past, and working out our ecumenical outlook for the future. If this does not happen, I can see no guarantee for real peace and fruitful co-operation. God’s Word and the good of our people demand this of us.

Finally may I recommend to you, within the framework of international ecumenism, an initiative drawing together the leaders of Eastern Europe’s Churches - in this way also Romania’s churches, divided as they are by national antagonism, to a peacemaking conference in Timișoara. This conference will be held on the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Romanian revolution.

Let us cherish the hope that, in the spirit of the national and denominational unity achieved in Timișoara last December, this anniversary meeting and celebration can lead us to real results.

May the Lord bless the work of the Novi Sad conference.

I send my fraternal greetings to each and every participant.

23 October 1990, Budapest

Conference on Reconciliation in Novi Sad (Yugoslavia) of the Churches of Hungary and Romania

Statement

We, representatives of Christian Churches in Romania and Hungary, meeting in Novi-Sad, Yugoslavia, 5-6 November 1990 at the invitation of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and in co-operation with the World Council of Churches (WCC), and hosted by the CEC member churches of Yugoslavia, wish to make the following statement:

Our churches, which have recently passed through a dark period of totalitarian atheistic communism which flagrantly infringed our freedoms and impeded the proper fulfilment of our mission, now for the first time in decades have the freedom to speak openly. We now have also the urgent duty to act for all our believers in assisting every effort to restore a just and human society in which the principles of freedom, truth and human dignity prevail.

This meeting constitutes a first step towards finding the best ways to help bring about a rapprochement and the creation of a new relationship between our peoples. We must rekindle in their hearts and souls the spirit of Christian love because we recognise that all human beings are created in the image of God.

We give thanks to God that in spite of state and ideological oppression in recent decades, by the grace of God the church has proclaimed the Gospel, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit has been able to keep alive the faith and nurture its identity.

Knowing the present realities in our own countries and cognisant of the recent past when churches could not fulfil their calling as they would have wished, we deeply regret, in a spirit of sincere repentance, all our past failures and compromises.

Now we must seek to help each other and to purify our conscience of any kind of selfishness, intolerance and chauvinism. We must reject and fight against all extremist manifestations from whatever source.

Our vision of the future common European home includes eliminating all the old structures and the thinking which generated hatred, tension and mistrust.

We respect the present borders between our countries. We wish to see a free circulation of people across borders which unite but not divide.

We are greatly concerned at the tens of thousands of refugees and displaced people who left their homes and families for various reasons, and pledge ourselves to their pastoral care. We hope and pray that conditions will be created which will encourage refugees to return to their original homeland.

We as churches, followers of Jesus Christ, and brothers and sisters, want to make clear and raise our voices to call on all to live together and resist all kinds of national division and strife. Our Saviour said: (John 13,35) "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another". If we are to be faithful to our Christian faith this type of love should be manifest.

We should create an atmosphere which encourages all to feel at home in their own country. God's will is that we live in love. If we do not live in love we destroy our future and that of our children. Therefore, there is no other solution but reconciliation.

In the course of history we have all been wounded, but this must now be forgotten in the interest of the future. A new way of love must be found. To live in freedom is only possible on the basis of guaranteed human rights. Where there is no equality there is no mutual esteem. True humanity cannot exist without love.

Therefore our churches wish to state that all peoples and ethnic minorities in our countries must have equal rights, and the possibility to practise their own culture in their own schools. One issue of real tension is the slow reaction of governments to the demands of the church to give back the nationalised church properties and institutions in both our countries.

As representatives of our churches, we declare as sacred and inalienable the rights of minorities in our countries and that we should work for the creation of a new spirit between our churches and peoples and attempt to correct the opposing images that have been perpetrated. In making this statement, we hope that this might initiate and stimulate processes for solving the many burning issues of minorities in Europe.

We see it as part of our responsibility in the new democratic climate of our countries to urge upon our governments the full implementation of all relevant agreements concerning human rights and religious liberty (e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the CSCE Helsinki Final Act and subsequent agreements, etc.) The churches in Romania were often forced to their great regret, to keep silent in condemning the violation of human rights and of ethnic minorities. Therefore in the future we commit ourselves, that if any church be hurt in its religious or ethnic rights, it is our Christian duty that other churches should manifest their support and solidarity.

We commit ourselves to convening further meetings of this character and express the hope that in these, other churches in our countries might also be invoked. We present this statement, knowing not only that the future is in the hands of God, but as a first step in a process of reconciliation and healing.

Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary
Hungarian Baptist Union
Reformed Church in Hungary
Romanian Orthodox Church
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania
Evangelical Synodal Presbyterian Church in Romania
Reformed Church in Romania

The first anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989

The Timișoara Declaration

We, the representatives of the churches of Central and Eastern Europe, meeting in Timișoara, Romania between 15-16 December 1990, have agreed that it is of the utmost importance to take a stand on the question of inter ethnic and inter denominational reconciliation.

This question is among the most sensitive to face our countries. Ethnic tension currently threatens the peace and stability of the Danube Basin as well as that of the entire continent. It obstructs the social and political transformation of our countries and the establishment of peaceful relations between them. In general, religious affiliation coincides with ethnic affiliation. The churches have played an important role in the national awakening of peoples. It would be a grave error, however, to accept the predominance of national-chauvinist sentiments, since as brothers in Christ, this would cast doubt on our unity and brotherhood.

We must admit that in the recent past, due to an incorrect assessment of the relationship between state and church, we remained silent when we should have made our voices heard.

The social conditions under which we act have changed fundamentally. This fact imposes new responsibilities on our denominations: responsibilities of a social, political and ethnic character. The church can contribute to outlining the moral grounds of political activity, without taking a position on the conflicts of day-to-day politics.

In the spirit of the bilateral conference at Novi Sad (5-6 November 1990), we condemn all forms and manifestations of chauvinism and discrimination on religious grounds. The churches, conscious of their mission, will seek to calm all those whose efforts are directed against brethren of other languages or faith.

In these times, when the church is one of the few forces possessing moral credibility and authority, it must act to heal social wounds and reconcile conflicts. This role is all the more important because in the countries of what was the Eastern bloc, most of the hopes that the collapse of the communist-totalitarian regimes inspired, have yet to be fulfilled. The churches must play an active and effective role to prevent any extremist or intolerant conduct by their followers. We believe that inter-denominational gatherings of the present type would be useful in the future, because they lead to closer familiarity and greater understanding between our groups. Through such conferences, the churches will actively seek to contribute to the resolution of social problems.

Reformed Church in Romania
Orthodox Church in Romania
Serb-Orthodox Church in Romania
Roman Catholic Church in Romania
Synodal Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Romania
Evangelical Church (A. B.) in Romania
Jewish Community in Romania
Unitarian Church in Romania
Reformed Church in Hungary
Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary

Roman Catholic Church in Hungary
Unitarian Church in Hungary
Christian Reformed Church in CSFR
Evangelical-Methodist Church in CSFR
Evangelical Church in Austria
Reformed Church in Austria
World Council of Churches
World Alliance of Reformed Churches
Conference of European Churches

The Permanent Conference of the Hungarian Christian Church Leaders in Romania

To all recognised religious denominations in Romania

Proposal

At the Conference of Hungarian Christian Church Leaders in Romania meeting, held on 30th August 1991 in Oradea, we have agreed that in order to promote inter ethnic and inter denominational reconciliation and democratic social development, that a national ecumenical meeting be organised with the participation of all recognised denominations in the country. This proposed meeting would provide the occasion and the opportunity to discuss issues of co-operation, our common ministry, and search for the way forward. At the same time, we would like to extend our relatively restricted ecumenical relationships to a national level, for the benefit of our churches and of our whole country.

Accordingly, we ask our brother leaders and leading bodies of the recognised denominations in Romania to accept our proposal and reply to the secretariat of our Conference.

If you find our proposal for an ecumenical meeting desirable, please include your own suggestions and ideas regarding the arrangements (e.g. time, place, agenda, etc.). Each of the churches represented below is prepared to undertake the organisation of the meeting.

16 October 1991, Satu Mare

Lajos Bálint
Alba Iulia

Dezsó Jenei
Cluj

Sebestyén Kräuter
Timișoara

Dr. Lajos Kovács
Cluj

Ferenc Sólyom
Târgu Mureș

Ferenc Antal
Brașov

László Tőkés
Oradea

József Tempfli
Oradea

Complementary Proposal

on the organisation of a Romanian-Hungarian Round Table Meeting

At the Conference of the leaders of Hungarian Churches in Romania, held on 30 August 1991 at Oradea, we unanimously decided to support this year's initiative of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) to organise a Romanian-Hungarian Round Table Meeting in order to settle the ethnic minority problems also referred to by the parliamentary committee of inquiry investigating the events which took place in March 1990 in Târgu-Mures.

Complementary to the proposal of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) we hereby propose to the Romanian political negotiating parties we hope to meet, that the round table meeting should take place and that the delegates of the churches of the Romanian nation and of the ethnic Hungarian minority should also participate. Enlarging the number of the participants with the delegates of the churches would strengthen the representative nature, and the social, moral, and political creditability of the meeting.

We take this opportunity to express our true wish that the ethnic Hungarian minority should no more be a mere "object", a "problem" to be solved in Romanian social and political life, but in the spirit of unrestricted equality and emancipation, it should become an equal partner of the Romanian majority. We rightly expect that as the government and other responsible political actors are prepared to start direct dialogue with, for example, delegates of trade unions, the representatives of the large ethnic Hungarian minority should also be accepted as their negotiating partner. The main aim of the round table meeting and of our participating in it, is to serve responsibly the cause of social and national reconciliation in Romania. Therefore we also welcome the participation of other ethnic minorities.

We send our proposal to the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), to those addressed in the original RMDSZ proposal and to the Romanian churches. We do this in the firm conviction that a dialogue based on patience, on mutual appreciation, respect and love can only lead to the solution of problems, to the settlement of the strained relations and tension existing between us, and to reconciliation.

If our proposal and suggestions are acceptable to you, we could agree on the circumstances, conditions, details and agenda of the round table meeting, through mutual preliminary negotiations.

16 October 1991, Satu Mare

Lajos Bálint

Roman Catholic Archbishop
of Alba Iulia

Pál Reizer

Roman Catholic Bishop
of Satu Mare

Ferenc Lestyán

Roman Catholic Vicar
Târgu Mureş

Dezso Jenei

Unitarian General Superintendent
Cluj

József Tempfli
Roman Catholic Bishop
of Oradea

D. László Tőkés
Bishop of the Reformed Church
Oradea

Ferenc Antal
Reformed Church Recorder
Braşov

Attila L. Ardai
Roman Catholic Head of Department
Satu Mare

Dénes Farkas
Unitarian Councillor
Cluj

Sebastian Kräuter
Roman Catholic Bishop
of Timișoara

Dr. Lajos Kovács
Unitarian Bishop
Cluj

Dr. László Kertész
Reformed General Superintendent
Cluj

Lőrinc Mikó
Unitarian Executive Councillor
Cluj

Ecumenic sermon in the “Szent István” Cathedral

26 October 1991, Budapest

Memorandum

On 21 September 1991, the member churches of the Hungarian Ecumenical Council and the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary held a joint ecumenical service in St. Stephen's Basilica, Budapest. The Bishops and representatives of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Oradea and Alba Iulia as well as of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District also attended the service.

We took this occasion to pray for the peoples of Transylvania and Yugoslavia, and to express our solidarity with them.

The participating Churches considered the grave problems that exist in the Central and Eastern European region as a whole, and support peaceful solutions, leading to social, inter ethnic and inter denominational reconciliation. As we expressed in our statement concerning the situation in Yugoslavia: "...all people: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Albanians and Hungarians have the right to live in peace in their native land, and to national autonomy." Therefore, we note with concern the flight of ethnic groups from some countries, and the inter ethnic clashes which are taking place there.

The Churches participating in the ecumenical service consider it a duty of conscience and necessity to use their special skills as Churches relying on the Gospel, to contribute to the solution of the problems in the region as a whole, and to promote reconciliation. Thus, they address the European church organizations, in particular the CEC and the European Bishops' Conference, by requesting them to initiate and support the organization of an ecumenical church meeting that would most completely and effectively assist in the settlement of the increasingly critical situation.

Our present proposal is made in connection with the Conference of Reconciliation between Hungarian and Romanian Churches held at Novi Sad, in November 1990, with the backing of CEC. Our proposal is yet wider in scope, involving the Yugoslavian Churches, not least the Roman Catholic Church in the negotiations, and the possible involvement of some neighbouring countries, such as Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Austria. The understanding between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Hungary might serve to encourage Christians from surrounding countries to achieve cooperation between their Churches, for the benefit of all our peoples and churches.

26 October 1991, Budapest

In the name of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary:

Dr. László Paskai

Cardinal, Archbishop of Esztergom

In the name of the Reformed Church in Hungary:

Dr. Loránt Hegedűs

Bishop, Clerical President of Synod

In the name of the Board of the Ecumenical Council:

Dr. Elemér Kocsis

Reformed Church Bishop

In the name of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District:

D. László Tóké

Bishop

In the name of the Metropolitan District of Alba Iulia:

Dr. Lajos Bálint

Archbishop

In the name of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oradea:

József Tempfli

Bishop

In the name of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary:

Dr. Béla Harmati

Bishop and President

In the name of the Baptist Church of Hungary:

János Viczián

President

In the name of the Romanian Orthodox Church Vicariate:

Pál Ardelán

Vicar Episcopal

In the name of the Hungarian Orthodox Church:

D. Frigyes Hecker

Superintendent

In the name of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church of Western Europe:

Simeon

Metropolitan

The second anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989

Festive Speech¹

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
My dear friends,
My beloved brothers and sisters,*

Two years have passed since the people of Timișoara rose up against the Ceaușescu dictatorship and gave the whole country an example and sign that the time had come to win our freedom from decades of communist oppression. With the Grace of God, the events of 1989 began from this spot, the Timișoara Reformed Church.

We feel indebted to this past. In recognition of this, our Church, commemorated the outset of the uprising on its first anniversary, and as we continue to seek the same path forward, we do so now, on this, second anniversary.

Last year, we invited the churches of this and our neighbouring countries to Timișoara so that in ecumenical solidarity we could contribute to the solution of the ethnic problems present in our region.

This year, during which inter-ethnic relations have deteriorated further, we have expanded the scope of the invitation and emphasised that the anniversary events are being held in the spirit of inter-ethnic and specifically Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation. We are convinced that only the unity and exemplary ethnic and religious cohesion of two years ago in Timișoara can provide an antidote to the chauvinist nationalism which has been revived and artificially incited in recent months, and which may place an obstacle in the path of our democratic development, the progress of our country, and the development of post-communist society in the region as a whole. The only real alternative is reconciliation. That is mutual recognition, dialogue and understanding, then agreement. Not only a clear mind dictates this, but also our faith, which sees a brother in every creation, and sees someone saved by Christ be he Romanian or Hungarian, Catholic, Orthodox, Greek Catholic or Jewish. Any other approach or “policy” can be tragic and fatal to us - as the example of Yugoslavia clearly shows us.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

I welcome you as the guests of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District and the Congregation of Timișoara with respect, goodwill, and love. Thank you for accepting our invitation. I hope that our festive remembrance and discussion will take place in the spirit of Transylvanian and Timișoaran tolerance, that it will contribute to the solution of our country's problems, and further the cause of social and inter-ethnic reconciliation.

The day's programme falls into two main parts. This morning we will listen to a lecture on the history of Romanian-Hungarian relations. This will be followed by short presentations by the invited public bodies, organisations, churches and friendship societies on the mutual relations between them and on their work. This will enable us to share with one another timely and concrete experiences.

¹ Speech on the occasion of the conference entitled ‘The past and the future of Romanian-Hungarian relations’ held on the second anniversary of the Revolution of Timișoara from 1989.

Our afternoon discussion will approach the question of ethnicity from the point of view of theory and principle.

We would like to end the discussion with a closing statement accompanied by an appendix detailing the results of the friendship and reconciliation movement as examples and guidance for practical use.

An ecumenical service of worship followed by a press conference with the participation of those invited to the round table discussion will take place tomorrow, that is, Sunday morning.

If you will allow me to end this introduction with a suggestion: It would be good to group the associations and organisations serving the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation into a united movement or union, and to make our meetings a regular event. This would represent progress and a new start for the process of Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

14 December 1991, Timișoara

Appeal

Today, as we remember with bowed heads and contrition the terrors of dictatorship, the bravery of our people and their fearlessness in the face of death, the events of the revolution, and the sacrifice of those who gave their lives;

Today, as the worries we face seem only to increase, as the number of unfortunate people we meet grows, as life gets harder, as unforeseen dangers rise up to meet us;

Today, as irresponsible authorities make political and social capital by setting people, representatives, and groups of different ethnicity against one another;

Today, as we are surrounded by pain and ethnically motivated hatred; we, Romanians and Hungarians, the representatives of different ethnic groups and the representatives of friendship societies, churches, different civic organisations and political views have gathered together to search for understanding, and the ways and means to achieve reconciliation.

The external events of the revolution were accomplished in just a few days, but the real revolution which must take place in each individual's heart, in the way he thinks, in his feelings, and in his moral values, can only occur over time. And occur it will, when people are brave enough to face not just murderous firearms, but murderous thoughts and ideals, murderous feelings, and mutated values. Each time anyone, even one person, is prepared to say "No" to hatred and harmful prejudice, and act immediately with love, patience and understanding to his fellow man, whether or not that neighbour speaks a different language or prays in a different church, or possibly holds different political views, another small revolution has occurred. The Revolution that began here two years ago will only reach its successful conclusion when this inner revolution is achieved within each one of us.

We believe that in our society, those who attempt to divert the true revolution with hatred are not in the majority. Their loud propaganda betrays their weakness, as if they too can feel that we hold real power. Therefore, let us not be afraid, and let us not lose heart, there are many more of us than our enemies, and we represent a greater force than they do. Our strength is not loud noise, but love, the force of humanity.

If we are silent, however, and do nothing against the spread of intolerance, which serves the interests of the current authorities, we become party to their evils, which could bring the whole of society to a catastrophe. Let us then, encourage everyone, each using his sense of responsibility for the present and the future in his own way, in personal relationships, in the workplace, in different social and political organisations, in the churches, in schools, in Romanian-Hungarian Friendship Societies and in every other area of life, to work for the cause of national and social reconciliation.

Two years ago, innocent people died so that the spirit of democracy, tolerance and love, not oppression, violence and hatred would rule our society. It now depends on each of us individually, to ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain. We owe this both to those murdered in the revolution, and to our own consciences.

Let us not be afraid: Truth is our strength, and truth is invincible.

15 December 1991, Timișoara

Romanian-Hungarian Ecumenical Popular Meeting

8 May 1992, Miercurea Ciuc

Proclamation to the Romanian nation, to every inhabitant of Romania²

We, the participants in the Miercurea Ciuc ecumenical service of worship and gathering of the people, festively proclaim our good intentions and common purpose:

1. We offer you peace concerning the changes of fortune in the history of our common homeland!
2. Having learnt the lessons of previous centuries, do not allow the forces of darkness - hatred of one another and the deeming of our coexistence to be worthless - to force us into opposition with one another, as we would all lose through this.
3. Today, we still hold out for the recognition of the rights expressed in the Declaration of Alba Iulia on 1 December 1918.

Over 30,000 of your ethnic Hungarian countrymen gathered here today, publish their most important wishes: their natural rights to their mother tongue, to their culture, to organise their own institutions, to have returned the requisites their community needs in order to survive. Only with these can we feel at home in our common homeland, and struggle side by side with you for the establishment of democracy and a state governed by the rule of law in Romania.

4. In order to protect the identity of our two million strong community, we especially and urgently need mother tongue education at every level.

5. We declare that there can be no other standard in the area of human rights including minority rights. We wish to make use of the rights protected in international agreements. These are the bases not only of a future Europe, but of our mutual respect, our co-existence as equals under the law, and our common future.

So help us God!

8 May 1992, Miercurea Ciuc

² Those gathered in the city's main square unequivocally approved the Proclamation by a show of hands.

Request to the Romanian Nation³

Dear Romanian Brothers and Sisters,

“We are speaking to you and not to your instigators, and we speak with the voice of sincerity”. I quote the Appeal to the Romanian and German-Saxon people, delivered at the Szekely national assembly of Agyagfalva in 1848. “We respect your nationality, language and religion... Thus we invite you to accept our offered hands and join us...” (16-17 October 1848). As our great revolutionary leader, Lajos Kossuth stated: “Among all nations of Europe, the Hungarian and the Romanian peoples have to live in greatest harmony and agreement if they want to survive...” (12 December 1848).

This statement is also valid for our days: we live in one land, we need each other, we depend on each other, we can not succeed without each other.

Thus, we consider compulsory the message of General Bem, the “private soldier” of the Universal Freedom: “Hungarians, Saxons and Romanians, stretch out your hands to each other, get rid of any national hostility and you will be happy.” (21 March 1848)

The dictatorship in Central-Eastern Europe collapsed. After a long period of suffering and oppression, our homeland started towards liberty and democracy, but our liberty is poisoned by artificially incited national animosity.

In 1989, Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Serbs (and other nationalities) were enthusiastic about freedom and died together for liberty in Timișoara. The Hungarian and Romanian dead of Târgu Mureș, the young revolutionaries of Bucharest sacrificed their life for all of us. Let us not disgrace their memory. Let us not make useless their sacrifices.

In the spirit of Transylvanian tolerance, the love of freedom, the Popular Uprising in Timișoara and the Gospel of Peacefulness, we invite you for national reconciliation, dialogue, and mutual understanding. We do this, keeping in mind, that in this present grave and divided situation of our country and region, there is no choice, no alternative but this. Only this can be the way of development, progress and real democracy.

Our absolute commitment for reconciliation brought us to this assembly today, in the main square of Miercurea Ciuc. Together with our Romanian brothers and sisters praying and speaking with us, we advocate the message of the Apostle, Paul: “In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

8 May 1992, Miercurea Ciuc

³ The above Request was delivered by László Tőkés on the main square of the town, in the spirit of the ecumenical sermon, as an introduction to the Appeal.

Congress of Protestants in Europe

Appeal for a Firm Protestant Evangelical Standpoint in the Defence of the Minorities

The scriptural guideline for the Budapest European Protestant Congress is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans (15:7):

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Could any other message of the Scripture be more topical than this, now that Europe's shameful, decades of long separation have come to an end? The crucial obstacles to accepting one another have disappeared. The “Berlin Wall” has fallen.

An Eastern European who has had to live within the walls would say, “We can now set out to meet one another.”

I must add that, besides being isolated from the outside, people were separated by an abundance of “walls” within the Eastern bloc itself. We were living in a society closed in every sense of the word. The godlessness of the Marxist social order revealed itself in the diabolical programme of alienation and the denial of neighbourly love, which it instituted throughout our countries in diametric opposition to the teaching of scripture.

This statement is yet more fitting when made by a member of a minority community, who because of his language, culture, and religion, was considered “alien”, who could not be consoled by the illusion of an enforced homogeneous socialist-nationalist unity and who in addition to the general alienation had to bear the marks of his own specific differences. Moreover, such minorities were especially prohibited from maintaining contact with their own nation and church, and with their own brothers and sisters living on the other side of the border.

Thanks be to God, the time has at last come, not only here and now in Budapest, but also throughout Europe - for us to meet one another, find one another, and accept one another as the gospel teaches us. In reality, this step turns out not to be quite so easy.

Nationalism, among other things, is threatening our success, our bloodless victory in the “Third World War” - as one renowned politician described the recent changes in Europe - with bloodshed. As for the economic barriers dividing the West and East, and the new Eastern boundary to the continent recently erected between Central and Eastern Europe, it is better leave them unmentioned.

It is paradoxical that since 1989, when Christ created the basic opportunities for us to draw near to one another, since he brought us out from “captivity in communism's Babylon” and freed us to accept one another, the peoples of our region have done exactly the opposite, turning against one another with an extraordinary vehemence. Chauvinism, intolerance and ethnic hatred are perched on the ruins of the past. Unfortunately, we also find that our faith, which urges us to unite, is almost helpless when facing these problems. Indeed, in some cases these conflicts between national and ethnic groups are even intensified on an ecclesiastical level. Our churches are dragged along by the “imperative” of political and social circumstances.

This once let us put aside the historical, social, political, and economic factors, disregard the general phenomenon of rivalry between nations, and the traditional religious and confessional divisions which we have inherited, and concentrate on one decisive aspect alone, the only relationship which blocks the way to rapprochement and acceptance: the issue of minorities. The predicament of minorities is the collective condition of the “little children” accepted by Christ, our Lord. Our disdainful numbers and our otherness do not prompt the majority to accept us, to welcome us, but rather to devour and assimilate us. Which it would do - mutatis mutandis - with intolerance, with the awareness of politicians or the elementary impulsiveness of the mob that characterised the counter-reformation era. The aspirations of the numerically stronger majority nations to achieve an annihilating, assimilating exclusiveness for themselves have a similar effect in our region as the merciless law of natural selection. In the areas of Eastern Europe inhabited by minorities, “the pagan” desire to dominate confronts the gospel of the “Son of man” and the ideals of Christian ministry.

“The little children” need love, care and support - their lot is instead one of privation, suffering, oppression and persecution.

“Christian Europe” has reached the stage where human rights are accepted without reservation - on an individual level. Churches and the ecumenical movement actively participate in the fight for human rights. Conversely, issues of collective rights for minorities are still treated with reservation and have yet to be established in legal form in international politics or in the life of the churches. In my judgement, our churches can hesitate no longer, they can no longer through circumspection or opportunism “assist” the “world” to ignore the problems of minorities, even less can they support intolerant, totalitarian authorities as they resort to assimilation and physical or spiritual genocide. The time has come for them to go beyond contenting themselves with the obligatory condemnation of racism or anti-Semitism. They must now take up a firm and unanimous position and elaborate their “policy” regarding this specific problem of East European nationalism and the minorities issue. This attitude would be particularly appropriate for European Protestantism, which rose like David from a starting position of weakness and minority. It is in this attitude that the “power of the powerless” who live in covenant with God could show its true gospel clarity.

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak.” (Rom 15:1)

21 March 1992, Oradea

**To the Romanian Orthodox Congregation of Hodac
To the Inhabitants of Hodac Village⁴**

*“In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,
for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7,12)*

Dear Fellow Citizens!

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

In the spirit of the Bible verse I have quoted and obeying the teachings of Biblical Law and of the Prophets, I am writing in brotherly love to inform you that I stand ready to visit your village and your community to promote reconciliation between Romanians and Hungarians, and to dispel the tensions which have been raised between us, at any time you find appropriate.

Yesterday afternoon, a joint church service was held in Temesvár/Timişoara, during which Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Jews, belonging to different denominations, to Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical and Israelite communities prayed together for the good of the country, for justice and reconciliation. I imagine our meeting in this spirit.

We all are children of God and we have all been redeemed by Christ. We can bring our prayers before God within a common service.

If you are able to accept my proposal and I can meet you, I would by all means like to visit our brother, Mihail Cofariu.

As I await your reply, I pray that God bless you and all the people of your village.

8 September 1992, Timişoara

⁴ This letter was addressed to the people of the village of Orthodox Denomination who entered Târgu Mureş in March 1990 on the incitement of the power and attended the provoked carnage.

Message to Hungary

Hungarian Brothers and Sisters!

It is with shock that I learned on this evening's television news broadcast, of the desecration of the Cenad Orthodox Church and the throwing of stones at the windows of the Romanian High School.

Anyone who believes that through this he is helping the hard pressed Hungarians of Transylvania is profoundly mistaken. Anyone who commits such an act and provides fuel for the extreme Romanian nationalists' fire, does irreparable harm to the cause of Romania's Hungarians. Such acts give a basis of reciprocity for any anti Hungarian acts which the crack brained mayor of Cluj may be contemplating. Anyone who chooses to fight hate with hate or illegality with illegality attacks both Hungarian and Romanian democratic development and allies himself with those who - regardless of their nationality - are enemies of democracy and of our nation.

I ask the people of the Republic of Hungary that, if they wish to love and protect us, they should love and protect our neighbours the Romanians. They are not our enemies. Our real enemies are all those who opposed the Hungarians, Romanians and other oppressed nations who together and simultaneously took to the streets of Timișoara and cities throughout Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. Do not allow the hopes and results of this unity to be reduced to nothing. The justice of King Matthew in Cluj can be protected only through this unity.

4 December 1992, Oradea

Postscript

1. We cannot rule out the possibility that a well planned piece of provocation was behind the events of Cenad. If this is the case, we are doubly entitled to worry about these sad events. I ask the relevant authorities in Hungary to investigate thoroughly the Cenad case and so prevent any harmful development or manipulation of the crime.

2. Concerning the Cenad events, the following conclusion has presented itself. While Hungarian Television - quite correctly - arrived immediately on the scene in Cenad, not one true picture has emerged of the developments in Cluj even though four days have passed. Instead the news reporters have satisfied themselves with showing archive pictures of Cluj, and supplementing them with simplified wordy reporting. It is painful that our mother country's national television passes over so impassionately the trials which regularly affect the Transylvanian Hungarian community. Alajos Chrudinák and the Panoráma current affairs team, managed to be present in Timișoara and the lives of the Hungarians who live beyond Hungary's borders under incomparably more difficult conditions.

On the other hand it is thought-provoking, that the case in Cenad has received proportionately larger coverage than the national abuse in Cluj. The Mass Media in Hungary, time and time again, gets exhaustive every, otherwise condemnable, verbal or individual national conflict, while the presentation of anti-Hungarian manifestations from beyond the frontiers of Hungary, in the Mass Media being off the beam, several times are considered "nationalism", further more "incitement". The unmercifully true and relentlessly vigilant information is proper. But it is unacceptable that intentionally or well-meaningly used emphasis or interpretations create that false impression in the world that Hungary is the number one ground of chauvinism and

xenophobia. The anti-Hungarian nationalism of the states formed by the division of Hungary culminates in this way by our self-accusation springing from our complex of a “guilty nation”. Instead of joining forces with each other, apart from border lines, for self defence, the Hungarian Mass Media is inclined, in spite of all their presumable good faith, to anticipate the growing foreign anti-Hungarian attitude. And this contributes to wreak more havoc in our already undermined national self-respect.

On the third anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989

Opening Speech⁵

Dear Participants, dear brothers and sisters!

This is the third such conference to be organised by the Reformed Church in Timișoara. Anniversaries of the events of three years ago, of Romania's changes in 1989 require us to go beyond reverend worship, and overcome the jubilant revolutionary demagoguery of those who unworthily used the bloody changes for their own ends. Instead, with our combined strength, with our unity, we are seeking a way to push forward and complete the process of change which began then. The powerful and living memory of what happened then spurs us into action. That is why we have come to Timișoara, to the town whose example of initiative and whose continually existing spirit provides us with a true measure and example for the continuation of our social, political and ecclesiastical struggle.

In 1990, on the first anniversary, representatives of the churches from Romania and neighbouring countries met in Timișoara, demonstrating that the problems we face, are the same throughout the post-communist region, and that the public and political duty of peacekeeping can play an important role in compensating for inadequate political structures, disequilibrium, and societies oppressed for decades.

Last year, the emphasis moved from the ecclesiastical to include the social sphere, with the invitation of democracy organisations, associations, and public figures, together with the representatives of the domestic churches. The discussion centered on newly inflamed nationalism and on national reconciliation.

This year's gathering, entitled Justice and Reconciliation attempts to synthesise the results of the previous two conferences, and at the same time widen the discussion. While for the last two years, the main emphasis has concerned the nation and nationality, that is, ethnic and religious reconciliation, the wider social relationships have of course not been neglected. This year however, we have started from the widest possible theoretical base. From the start, we have made clear that the doing of justice is an inescapable pre-condition for the transformation of Romania's society, and it is only in relation to this that we can conceive our country's security and complete societal - national, ethnic and religious - reconciliation. If justice is not done, there can be no moral renewal; without justice, overcoming Romania's multifaceted crisis will remain a vain hope.

According to the Holy Scripture, Justice and Peace are closely intertwined. Isaiah tells us, "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever." (Isaiah 32:17). On the other hand, Jeremiah shows us that while "they [deceitfully] dress the wound of my people as if it were all right," they say in vain "peace, peace... when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)

Justice is needed in Romania to allow peace and tranquillity to exist at last. As long as the salvaged regime continues to maintain at policy level its old habits of covering up the truth with a series of lies, there will be no peace, stability and democracy in our country. Until

⁵ Speech on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Revolution of Timișoara in the framework of the minority conference 'Justice and Reconciliation'.

justice has been given to those aggrieved by the past regime, by the theft of the revolution and by present injustice, there can be no talk of reconciliation or constructive social consensus. While a dominant tendency in our current public life, supported or at least allowed by the authorities, is a totalitarian national ideology of aggressive nationalism and the exclusion of all that is different, there will be no true reconciliation, and we will remain far from Europe and from democracy.

“Timișoara compels us”, we wrote in the invitation. The unity and fearlessness in the face of death shown by Timișoara’s multi-ethnic and multi-faith population and the living example of the city’s heroes who gave their lives compel us not to allow our hard-won freedom to be lost, and obliges us to fight despotism parading in national colours. “People of good will must believe with complete trust in the enlightenment, the light will spread unceasingly until eventually truth and lies can clearly be distinguished from one another” (Mihai Eminescu). And then as, Isaiah, the prophet of imprisonment tells us, “the fruit of righteousness will be peace”.

15 December 1992, Timișoara

Country-Wide Ecumenical Conference

1-2 April 1993, Cluj

The Churches' Mission in the solution of conflict between nationalities and religions in the service of national reconciliation

The fall of the Ceaușescu dictatorship, and the nation-wide changes of 1989 have made possible the renewal of Romanian ecclesiastical and religious life. At the same time, they have cleared the way for us to re-examine the relationships between our churches, and to place them on a new footing.

On the other hand, the critical situation which has followed our "Babylonian imprisonment" under the dictatorship, and the serious social problems and tensions which go with it, have made essential the churches' increased involvement and effective service in the area of national reconstruction and in the movement towards social peace.

From the point of view of the minorities and in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, the ethnic conflicts which the fall of communism has brought to the surface are especially pressing and require us to act quickly.

The circumstances and ideas outlined above, moved our church as early as May 1990, and later the Conference of Hungarian Christian Church Leaders, to begin the organisation of a national ecumenical conference, with the participation of all the legally recognised denominations in Romania.

This plan was strengthened along the way by the Romanian-Hungarian interdenominational conference called by the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches, and held in Novi Sad in November 1990, which served to push forward the aim of inter-ethnic and interdenominational reconciliation.

Thanks be to God, after three years of overcoming all types of difficulties, the majority of our country's religions and denominations are able to meet today in the Festive Hall of the Protestant Theological Institution in Cluj.

In the name of our church, I welcome with love and respect the representatives of the various denominations gathered here - in the hope that we can succeed in regaining the interdenominational understanding and "moral climate" which once existed in this city and which the recently appointed Orthodox Archbishop of Cluj emphasised in the columns of the Romania Liberă newspaper (R.L. 6-7.ii.1993).

In this interview, His Holiness Bartolomeu specifies that for real dialogue, besides the necessary minimum of trust, and mutual openness, it is indispensably important that whoever talks to him, "...should remember (and should keep in mind) that he is speaking to a member of the Orthodox Church. In other words, we must pay close attention to identity. This is extremely important! Every person should remain true to their own identity, and the other participants should respect this. Mutual respect for identity is essential!" - so says the Orthodox Archbishop of Cluj.

Although the statement was made in connection with the Orthodox-Greek Catholic relationship, we Hungarian Christians can only agree. I am convinced, that our situation as a double - ethnic and religious - minority, and the problems which stem from it, can only be resolved if our identity is held in respect, both theoretically and in practice. This is also true for other minorities (e.g. the Serbian Orthodox, the Jewish, the Armenian, and the Muslim groups). From this point of view, several of us - together with our Greek Catholic Brothers and sisters - seek the understanding and support of the Orthodox Church.

Mutatis mutandis, we find that Vasile Hossu, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Oradea, could almost be speaking for us, when he states: "...we have come to the conclusion that the Romanian people need an ecumenical church. We are all Romanians, and history itself is a witness to our patriotism. Three hundred years lie behind us which have brought with them the Supplex, our Transylvanian schools, and the Memorandum, in which we played our part" - (Crişana, 2 March 1993).

Alongside Bishop Hossu, many of the churches and national communities present today can say that their centuries of history enfold this land. We could think, for the sake of example, of the 750 years of Saxon Christianity or of the ancient Roman Catholic bishopric of Alba Iulia, of the 450 year old Hungarian reformation, or of Transylvania's Protestant lords.

Just this year, we celebrated the 450th anniversary of the Peace of Turda, which for the first time in the world proclaimed freedom of religion - in the modern sense of the phrase - the benefits of which were felt by all Transylvania's denominations, including the Orthodox Romanians. The Peace of Turda has provided the theoretical spring for the Transylvanian tolerance which can be felt even to this day.

Thus, just like Orthodox and Greek Catholic Romanians, we also come from pasts containing identities and values - which we are prepared to lay at the altar of national ecumenical fellowship.

On the other hand, we cannot allow these jealously guarded treasures to be stolen from us by the "earthly powers", totalitarian dictators, a monolithic ethnocracy or the dark powers of extreme chauvinist exclusiveness.

We seek effective support from the fellowship of Romanian churches for the communities and churches which are getting weaker and dying out, among them, the Hungarian community of Romania and its churches.

We, Hungarian Christians of Romania, have been getting weaker for seventy years. Artificial assimilation and forced emigration have thinned our ranks. Neither the feudal capitalist regime, nor the fascists, nor the communists have shown any mercy to us. Nor has any real change in our position occurred in recent years.

Chauvinist hatred rages against us from the extremist political parties, the media and the parliament. The Iliescu regime even today gives voice at home and abroad to Ceauşescu's demagogic message that "the minority problem has been solved", and that "the minority situation in Romania is much better than in most European countries". This is not true.

We do not want to be in danger of extinction like the German - Saxon and Schwabian, Lutheran and Roman Catholic - Christians, or in the last stages of emigration like the Jews of the Mosaic confession. Our closed or ruined churches and their silenced bells could not praise God. Nor do we wish to follow the path of the Csángos of Moldova - we do not want to forget our prayers and our mother tongue.

There is much for the representatives of the national minorities here to say: about their churches, their schools, their cultural plight, the dying out of their mother tongues, their lack of institutions, the reduction of their ethnic rights, their plight as the remains of a community and the torturing worries which accompany this plight.

Who can we tell this to, other than our Romanian Christian brothers and sisters, who in certain areas of the country have experienced similar oppression and injuries in the past, and who in the same way as we do now, struggle for their human and community rights, for the progress of their nation and their society?

* * *

Today I turn to our sister churches and their respected representatives in the spirit of Timișoara's revolutionary unity, ecumenism, and society building tolerance. In the spirit that characterised the thousand some participants and noble speakers at the ecumenical service of worship in the Reformed Church in Timișoara on 7 September 1992.

Dr Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of the Banat, said the following:

“There are many people today ... who are here not only to stand beside ... but rather to be together with our Reformed brothers and sisters (...) this is not just solidarity, nor even ecumenism, a word whose real meaning is too often abused. We have come to express, and I have come to express our knowledge of our common identity... just as in December 1989, here in Timișoara, as in the country as a whole, living by a motto which was useful at the time - we felt as one, with no regard for differences based on denominational, national or ethnic convictions, now too, we make up one family, a family in which each member bears the burden of almost forty years of oppression. We feel ourselves to be one body also today, just as we were one body on those memorable December days when the communist dictatorship collapsed in the face of the almost unanimous will of the people of this land; on those days when we felt that nothing could divide us. Today also this knowledge forms our identity...”

This testimony by Greek Catholic Vicar Nicolae Theodorescu followed a speech by the Roman Catholic Bishop Sebastian Kräuter:

“...it is our love of God much more than our fear of God that keeps us together... as Metropolitan Corneanu has said... not just to stand alongside one another, but to be together, if possible, as the body of Christ's fellowship; to be together in the spirit of Timișoara, in the same spirit of unity which can awake this people's conscience...; to ask, and to ask out loud that God do justice, that he help us to find the way proclaimed in the Christian Gospel, the road taken by Europe's civilised countries.”

The Pastor of the Banks of the Bega Baptist Congregation, Petre Dugulescu MP continued:

“...[if] then (Sunday 17 December 1989) we were together, now,...I can say in the words of the Metropolitan of the Banat, that we are together. And since then, we are always together in Timișoara, in the spirit of Timisoara and of God, Reformed, Orthodox, Baptist, Catholic, Jews, Hungarians, Germans, Romanians, Serbs, and all those who believe in God, who believe in his love and justice. And that is why we are here, because we want to make the call of Timisoara a call for truth, for justice and for integrity...”

The list of speakers was closed by the Chief Rabbi Dr Ernest Neumann, with evidence of the truth held by the martyrs of Timișoara. The many decades of Timișoaran ecumenism revealed itself in an exemplary form on that evening, as our Lord Jesus Christ's High Priest prayer was brought to mind. That categorical imperative of our faith: “that all of us may be one..., so that

the world may believe that the Father has sent us” (John 17:21), right here, to this vexed area of Europe, right to this country threatened by crisis and hate.

* * *

Maintaining contact, everyday coexistence, and the realities of daily life are though not the same as a hallowing festival, finding one another, spirited declarations or the world of maximum morality. Faith, truth, love, and best intentions founder daily on the rocks of our mediocre earthly existence and our sins. Through our incomprehension, through deception, through bad intentions, and through a failure to understand, we often lose our way and taking the circuitous route through the desert, we have difficulty finding the way of the Gospel to the promised land.

To be one in Christ - the optimal requirement of the Gospel and the endeavour our churches have started upon, still seems quite a distant goal. It follows that our meeting today is an important point and a promising start to a long journey.

Our churches’ immediate task, which accords with God’s will and the duties of our faith, is to take on, with an attempt at brotherly understanding, the duty of peace-making, to take part together in the treatment and solution of the ethnic and minority issues which threaten the whole region, and endanger European stability.

In the fulfilment of this duty, the first and obvious task would be for us to face our tragic inheritance of the past, which actively follows us today, and come to a clear, unambiguous common position on the domestic ethnic situation.

This would be followed by identifying common aims and practical tasks, in the spirit of Christ’s teaching: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

And so that this all does not remain empty speech and a festive closing document gathering dust, the sister churches gathered here should make provision for their decisions to be fulfilled and effected in an institutional form, with mutual checks being made on our progress.

I believe that if we can reach agreement on the questions which have been raised, we will be fulfilling a duty which is pleasing to God, and which serves the good of our country, of our churches, and of our ethnic communities.

1 April 1993, Oradea

Considerations and Motions

to Help Develop a Common Position of the Hungarian Christian Churches for the Meeting of 1-2 April

Basic Idea: The anonymous or at least occasional ecumenical and inter-denominational relationships should become real, especially with regard to the majority Orthodox Church. The capacity of the Conference to produce results, for co-operation and for our relationships to be effective depends in a large extent upon our relationship with the Orthodox Church. In this respect, we must overcome the situation which has characterised the past. This is our chance to make the festive and formal ecumenism real and effective. This would be especially desirable for the improvement of inter-ethnic relations, the reduction of tension, and not least, in the interests of achieving our educational goals.

Taking a pragmatic approach: we must provide for the agreement and support of the Orthodox and other churches on a number of issues which to us are the most important.

I suggest:

1. The acceptance of a joint, valuable Statement of Position/Declaration which is as concrete and results-based as possible.
2. The churches participating in the conference, either together or individually should publish a circular letter, which should be distributed and made known in churches and congregations - in a form which will be effective
3. A joint Memorandum should be prepared for the countries' leaders, which contains or focuses attention solely on ethnic issues.
4. Other forms of action are also possible.

Concrete suggestions on certain subjects and themes:

1. The Conference, and the participating churches should condemn extreme nationalism and such concrete displays of this, e.g.: incitement in the parliament, the extremist press, extremist personalities (e.g. Funar, CV Tudor), extremist organisations, (e.g. patriotic guards) streets named after Antonescu, the removal of Hungarian street names, the vandalism of plaques and statues, the ban on bilingual or Hungarian language street signs, glorification of Ceaușescu, the authority's blindness to nationalism, assimilation, re-settlement, the mistreatment of Hungarian convicts, the failure to give justice in general, anti-Semitism, hatred of Roma, the disproportionate emigration of minorities (e.g. of Germans), a return to the pre-1989 state of affairs, demonstrations of counter-revolution.
2. We should prepare a principled stance on the following issues:
 - the use of the mother-tongue in legal proceedings and the administration
 - mother-tongue education at all levels,
 - the use of national symbols,
 - the return of buildings and property,
 - the moral rebirth of society
 - societal, inter-ethnic, and international reconciliation.

3. We should support:

- the establishment of a Ministry for the National Minorities
- a law on the national minorities, and on the protection of the national minorities -the acceptance of the bill on religion and religious organisations,
- the acceptance of the bill on education,
- the acceptance of a bill on the restitution of property, or on the compensation of its loss,
- the declaration of Easter Monday, as celebrated by the Western Churches as a national holiday
- a Romanian-Hungarian round table meeting should be held and we should participate in this, as we suggested also last year.
- the initiatives proposed by the Conference of Hungarian Church Leaders (1990-1993) - in general
- Romanian-Hungarian Friendship societies

4. We should start from and refer to the following pre-existing principles:

- The Novi Sad document (1990)
- The Sibiu Statement (AIDRom 1992)

5. We should adopt the following:

- Opinion 1201 of the General Assembly of the Council of Europe, with special attention to Point 8
- The European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages

6. Reference should be made to the following historical principle:

- The statutes of Turda (1568) - Tolerance

7. The conference, or rather the participating churches should recognise that, contrary to the official point of view (e.g. of Iliescu):

- the minorities issue in Romania has not been solved!

8. We should re-evaluate our ecumenical relations (a task also for the future), with special regard to the relationship between church and state during the period of “official ecumenism”.

9. An Ethnic or General Arbitration Commission should be established, which would continuously

- supervise the relevant issues,
- search for a solution, and act as a mediary in conflict situations.

10. We should push for a nation-wide ecumenical meeting every year

11. We should seek:

- the continuous exchange of information
- different concrete forms of co-operation, e.g. action, joint undertakings
- a meeting of reconciliation, common worship, etc., in the village of Hodac,
- joint action in the event that any of the churches is injured, etc.

Between 1-2 April, 1993 at last the Country-wide Ecumenical Conference was organized with

the attendance of the leaders of the twelve recognized denominations. This conference was initiated in May 1990. Representatives of the traditional Orthodox, the Armenian Catholic, the Israelite and the Serbian Orthodox denominations were absent.

International Minority Conference⁶

5-7 September 1993, Budapest

In the Community of Europe and the Fellowship of Churches for Minorities

For the representatives of the oppressed people of the former Soviet Empire it is a new phenomena to be able to present our problems to the world, to Europe, and we can search together for solutions to our vital issues in the community of nations, in the framework of international and European cooperation what is widening out in a spectacular way following the disorganization of the antagonistic political-ideological blocs and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. If nothing else, this is to be considered a major result of the changes starting in 1989.

Despised in their faith, humiliated in their self-respect and limited in their natural brotherly relationships, our Churches consider it a major gain, that they are able to return in the ecumenical world-wide movement of the international Christianity, and, as in these days in Budapest, together with our foreign brothers in faith, we may search the Gospel path which would lead out from a seriously divided complex world of Europe.

But these epoch making changes, in spite of the positive international cooperation and European process of integration, have their negative, better said tragic projections. In all probability, the chauvinism and nationalism revived in extreme violence, the ethnic and denominational conflicts, the xenophobia and anti-Semitism gaining ground on the entire continent are some of these negative results. These phenomena, the diabolic forces of bloody tempers and hatred, heavily test the expanding European unity and democracy, and also the ecumenism, searching for the road to renewal.

The war between the peoples of former Yugoslavia teaches lessons not only for Europe and the official policy-makers, but also for the Churches of Christ. Especially we, the Church servants of the minority communities of Eastern and Central Europe are able to feel the significance of this.

In all probability, this disturbing bad feeling of their remorse causes those present to act, to collaborate and to confer, both our brothers who can not be silent in their civic welfare and the Churches of the former Eastern bloc, who live amongst hostile ethnic relationships.

Yugoslavia is a memento for all, especially for the "Western world" of determinative politic and economic influence and for its Churches of greater opportunity to act, to be more attentive and helpful towards our peoples, tried by the tides of history and ravaged by communism, especially towards the suffering minorities of our region.

We greet in this sense the conference in Budapest of the Program for Human Rights of the Churches, and we appreciate that the Conference of European Churches, in the framework of the human right dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), recognized the timeliness and importance of the minority questions and it was ready to submit these to the international authority of the Churches.

⁶ Speech delivered on the minority conference organized by the Committee for Human Rights of the Conference of European Churches cooperating with the CSCE.

Between the parliamentary session of the CSCE, held in July this year in Helsinki and the coming conference of the European state presidents and prime ministers in Vienna in October, I consider it important to report to you the following, regarding the Romanian changes.

At any price, Romania wants to get into Europe. More specifically, Romania searches for its way out from its rapidly deepening economical, social and political crisis towards the advanced West. It has no other possibility or better choice. In this sense, Romania makes major efforts to gain among others, the membership in the Council of Europe and the Most Favored Nation Status.

These priorities determine Romania's actions on the field of minority policy. It wants to comply both to European and international minority requirements, keeping in mind the severity of the problem.

But the increasing requirements and the growing compulsion to comply do not represent real advance in the treatment of the ethnic problems, of the safeguarding of minority and human rights and on the field of bettering the conditions of the two million ethnic-Hungarian and one million inhabitants of other ethnicities. On the contrary: chauvinism rages in Romania in a rarely experienced way and measure. Although in altered form, the state nationalism of the previous regimes continues.

The pseudo-parliamental and national-communist regime of Iliescu, being in power now, lies on the pillars of the former nomenclature and the notorious Romanian secret police, and the Vacaroiu-government, supported by extremist nationalistic parties, follows the path way of communist restoration. The democratic changes felt in spite of all these, are caused by the inevitable forces of the changes, on the other hand by the stipulations of the democratic world and European requirements.

Otherwise, the regime aspiring in Europe, in a paradoxical and schizophrenic way, bases its power on the ideology of exclusive nationalism, and shows a preference for the application of the methods preserved from the dictatorship: ethnic incitement, deceit, subversiveness and underhand practices, in the sense of the classic slogan of "divide et impera".

Of course, nationalism and anti-Hungarian manifestations are not simply aims. First of all, they are weapons to maintain the regime, to preserve prosperity for its privileged, to oppress and to bring under control the people of the country. In this sense, it is as much anti-Romanian as anti-minority. Milosevic's war dictatorship afflicts in the same way the Serbs and their enemies.

But, it is also obvious, that the injured parties of this policy are after all the minorities, who are hostages and targets of the Power, and they are compelled to play the roles of "scapegoats" for the majority society.

The power, wanting to prove for Europe, true to Ceausescu's Romania makes efforts to take shape the most favorable image about the country for the outside world, for the Council of Europe or the Government of the United States, through its propaganda system working on a professional level. In compliance with this, giving way to its old reflexes, credulity or aversion to "redundant problems", the Western world is also susceptible to see in "good light" the Romanian reality, and "generously" disregards the aching minority injuries.

Mainly, not even the western Churches are exceptions of this, though their sensitiveness increased recently in large measure. It is difficult to make them understand that, for example, the impressing phraseology of the majority Orthodox Church cover a very different kind of reality.

Without entering in ill-mannered criticism, let me mention of the Romanian-Hungarian Church conference, organized in the spirit of mutual reconciliation on the initiation of the CEC, in November 1990 in Novi Sad, where the parties firmly aligned themselves to fight against chauvinism and intolerance, to protect the minority rights and the injured Churches. We may say that in the past three years practically nothing was carried out from this “holy decision”. The Orthodox Church never raised its voice to support the permanently injured minority Christians, further more, its certain chief priests were at the head of stirring up nationalism. In one instance an Orthodox Metropolitan consecrated the monument to the anti-revolutionary Securitate officers. There was an exception in the person of Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Timisoara, who consistently fought for minority rights.

Today I am not going to illustrate with data and facts the anti-minority Romanian policy. I just would like to present a general outline:

- Ethnic-Hungarian political prisoners are languishing in the jails of Romania because of their participation in the revolutionary events of 1989, while the assassins of more than a thousand victims were not call to account yet. By show trials (following the events of December 1989, March 1990 in Târgu Mureş), only Hungarians and Gypsies were sentenced. The chief inspector for nationalities of the CSCE and the Romanian reporter of the Council of Europe spoke out on their behalf.
- The power tolerates, further more sometimes encourages the functioning of extremist nationalistic parties. Legionary (fascist) movements appeared in the political field of the country. Anti-Semitic propaganda became something common.
- The minorities in Romania, especially the Hungarians who live in great number or in majority in certain regions are submitted to economical, language, cultural and educational discrimination.
- Because of the artificial assimilation and the forced emigration the number of the Hungarian minority in Romania stagnated for 75 years, dangerously decreasing. In the last few years hundred-thousands of ethnic-German have left our country, because of the adverse economic and ethnic circumstances.
- The Constitution of Romania declares the country “unified Romanian national state”, it does not recognize as state forming ethnicities the minority national communities.
- The nationalized ecclesiastical goods were not restored, and discrimination is felt towards national and religious minorities.

This enumeration is a true mirror for our situation. The Romanian anti-minority policy made us on August 31st of this year, to recall our DAHR representatives from the Council of National Minorities, operated by the Romanian Government. This institution was not able to show real results. It was nothing else but a display-institution established to deceive Europe.

Nonetheless, the Hungarians in Romania do not enter in the depraving policy of injury. The DAHR, as a member to the opposition Romanian Democratic Convention, comes out in support of democratic changes, political pluralism, constitutionality and market economy, further more it readily assists the main objects of Romania foreign affairs (membership in Council of Europe, Most Favored Nation Status) on the condition of ensuring human and minority rights.

For the sake of the resolution of common problems, the DAHR keeps on urging the organization of a country-wide Romanian-Hungarian round table conference, without any results.

To the proposal of the Hungarian Churches in Romania, we tried to promote Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation in the framework of a country-wide ecumenical meeting with trifling results.

We hope, that the conference in October of the CSCE in Vienna and generally the European institutions will efficiently contribute to the settlement of minority questions in our region and Romania, and by properly watching, checking and sanctioning systems, they will attain, that Romania, as well as Slovakia, not only will sign, but also will carry out the documents regarding the human and minority rights of a common Europe.

6 September 1993, Budapest

Democracy and minorities in Romania

Not long ago, it was quite unusual to mention democracy and ethnic minorities in the same breath. This was true not only in the East, where the totalitarian authorities sentenced hundreds of ethnic groups and millions of citizens who belonged to them to non-existence in the name of soviet internationalism, but in a different way, also in the Western countries, which after several decades of selective amnesia, have only now, prompted by the brutal bloodshed taking place in the former Yugoslavia, become aware of the reality of ethnic problems.

“Popular democracy” was the way Ceaușescu handed this issue. The megalomaniac dictator’s regime was built on two pillars, communism and nationalism. To him, democracy meant national and ethnic homogeneity, and the ethnic problem was often declared to have been “finally solved” or sometimes as “non-existent”. The 3-5 million people who still belonged to the Hungarian, German, Jewish, Serbian, Roma and other ethnic minorities thought differently. The two million strong Hungarian minority in Romania has always refused to assume the label “Romanians of Hungarian origin”, a term borrowed from the ideological dictionary of the dictator’s monolithic regime, and which meant - in Ceausescu’s “homogenous nation” strategy, that Hungarians were to be completely assimilated into the majority nation.

In the past, then, “democracy” and “ethnic minority” were only heard in this restrictive and homogenising context, and - directly or indirectly, expressly or implicitly - both political blocs favoured this interpretation and the oppressive practice that resulted from it.

The desire for democracy which has arisen from the changes of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, has been accompanied by the emergence of nationalism among small nations and peoples: a reaction to the earlier - unenlightened - policy of assimilation. Movements for the emancipation of minorities and for national awakening have asserted themselves as an inseparable phenomena of the democratisation process.

Romania’s minorities, from the very beginning of the 1989 revolution, have made the democratisation of the country and minority rights their battle cry and framed democratic national demands in a political programme. It is no accident that the names of the minority organisations which sprang up at the time contained both the term “democratic” and the name of the minority group. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), the German Democratic Forum in Romania, and the Democratic Union of Roma in Romania gained attention for their programmes in their very names.

The ethnic minorities’s use of the term “democratic” in defining themselves is not just a fashion or a phenomenon of the times - it has real meaning. It expresses concisely and fundamentally that the only course which will allow the minorities to survive and maintain their identity. This accounts for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) finishing second behind Iliescu’s neo-communist National Salvation Front in the elections of May 1990, Romania’s first ever democratic elections. The Hungarians in Romania voted then, and have ever since, for democracy, as the only means to secure their survival, the only way to achieve their individual and minority rights, to free themselves from decades of majority oppression.

Due to their situation, the Hungarians in Transylvania see minority existence and democracy as intimately connected. According to the DAHR, the minorities issue is not an ethnic peculiarity to be set against general democratic principles; on the contrary, only in a democratic

context can this issue be understood correctly, dealt with efficiently and, in time, be eased and resolved. To Romania's Hungarian minority, democracy is not just a general conviction, a principle, it is also their basic vital interest. It is natural then, for the DAHR to be one of the founding members of the opposition Romanian Democratic Convention, the largest coalition of democratic parties, and as such, a decisive factor in its final election results.

Minority and democracy are not only linked in Romanian political life but, more and more strongly, also in international politics. The changes of 1989, have naturally cleared the thorny obstacles to the discussion of the almost taboo issue of minorities. Thanks to a slow but continuous development of politics and law, nowadays, The assurance of minority rights is accepted throughout the world to be a legitimate democratic demand and has now been framed in basic international documents.

This has been increasingly felt in relation to Romania's acceptance as a member of the Council of Europe. The Assembly of the Council of Europe which gathered at the end of September and voted to admit Romania, was not satisfied with calling Romania to report on the implementation of human rights, and with a worthy declaration of norms applying to minorities, nor with the regular supervising of their application in Romania; however, having learned from their previous, unpleasant experiences in this field (e.g. the case of Slovakia), the Council added nine requirements to the decision on admission. Some of the actions required of the Romanian Government are as follows:

- respect minorities (point 1);
- adopt legislation on national minorities (point 10(i));
- sign the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (point 11);
- combat racism and anti-Semitism, as well as all forms of nationalist and religious discrimination and incitement thereto (point 10(ii));
- re-consider in a positive manner the issue of releasing those persons imprisoned on political or ethnic grounds (point 9)
- permit the establishment of church schools with a particular view to teaching children of minority groups their mother tongue (point 8).

Almost all the amendments contain a direct reference to minorities. As well as these specific references, many of the points made by the Assembly also have important effects for the minorities. For example, that:

- the Romanian authorities and the Romanian Parliament adopt and implement ... legislation on education (point 10(i));
- the Romanian authorities sign the European Charter on Local Government (point 6)
- the Romanian Government permit the establishment and operation of church schools (point 8).

Although in Romanian political practise there is a traditional duplicity which manifests itself in "everything is signed, but nothing is honoured", an unpleasant practise the effects of which we have recently endured, - the requirements made by the Council of Europe, and especially the second part that provides mechanisms for their supervision (according to Opinion no. 488/1993 of the Assembly) give Romania's minorities hope, that their rights and opportunities for survival will in future be guaranteed.

Well-founded doubts remain, as a very recent almost sacrilegious example will show.

At the 6 October meeting of the Romanian Senate, a Hungarian, one of the DAHR senators, suggested that the House pay tribute to the thirteen martyrs, who were sentenced to death and executed for their role in the revolution of 1848-49, with a moment of silence on that the 144th anniversary of their death. This could be a sign of Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation, he suggested.

It is interesting that the generals executed on October 6 for supporting Kossuth Lajos in his war of independence from Austria, were members of different nations. There were not only Hungarians among them, but also Germans, Serbs, Croats and Austrians. They embodied an ideal of freedom which was not limited to one nation - and they were ready to die for this ideal.

The Hungarian senator's suggestion was followed by a two hour long sequence of anti-Hungarian abuse from some dozen extremist Romanian senators, who vilified the martyrs; and ended with a dubious compromise.

This scene of hatred took place only days after Romania had been admitted to the Council of Europe. Point 10 of the decision to admit Romania says: "The Assembly proposes that the Romanian authorities and the Romanian Parliament make use of all means available to a constitutional state in order to combat ...all forms of nationalist and religious discrimination and incitement thereto." No comment.

7 October 1993, Oradea

On the fourth anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989

Declaration⁷

Gathered here today, in the city where the revolutionary events of 1989 began, to celebrate an ecumenical thanksgiving service in the Timisoara Reformed Church, the leaders, representatives and faithful of the assembled Romanian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical Baptist, and Pentecostal Churches and of the Jewish faith give thanks to God as they remember the sacrifices of those revolutionaries and heroes, whose fearless bravery and perseverance resulted in the collapse of the communist dictatorship and provided a starting point for change in Romania.

Through their equal participation in this battle, the citizens of Timisoara of all nationalities and all denominations gave Romania an example of fraternal co-operation between different national groups, and of ecumenical unity between her churches. It is our conviction that freedom is a universal value, which can only be gained and kept with the combined effort of our diverse peoples and denominations.

In the spirit of Timisoara's revolutionary unity, we, sister churches united in remembrance and prayer, put our faith in the continuation of ethnic and religious reconciliation. Together we have searched for the path to national and social reconciliation, through the Conference of Central and Eastern European Churches in 1990; through the 1991 joint meeting of Hungarian-Romanian Friendship Societies; and through the discussions the representatives of Romania's minorities held here in December 1992. Through the ecumenical services and gatherings of the last few years, as well as through the commemorative services held in the Orthodox Cathedral and other churches, we have jointly confessed the fraternal community of nations and God's impartial grace and liberation. This faith and this spirituality unite and hallow our ecumenical fellowship.

We are obliged by our faith in God, by our fraternal community and by the example of the heroes of Timișoara to believe in freedom, in the continued democratic transformation of our country, in the rule of law, in human rights, and in all the values taught to us by the Gospel and for which the heroes of Timișoara sacrificed their lives. If the Church is political, it is the politics of Biblical Law, which accord with the teachings of Holy Scripture.

As Romanian churches, we pledge ourselves to uphold the unity of our society; churches must be the builders of unity, not of discord.

It is for this reason that we condemn divisive attempts to restore communism; the linguistic aggression of the extreme nationalists; chauvinistic anti-ethnic incitement; the sequence of ethnic provocation and diversion in Cluj and in the Szeklerland; the incitement of nationalism in parliament; anti-Semitic propaganda; and the Government's passivity to and abetting of these crimes. We reject all undemocratic and divisive manipulation that uses the alleged "Hungarian threat" and other "enemy images". We also reject prejudiced attempts by officials and extremists to undermine particular religions and the democratic opposition. These methods, which are drawn from the inventory of communist oppression, continue to impede

⁷ The participants of the ecumenical memorial service of the fourth anniversary of the Revolution of Timișoara supported unequivocally the Declaration.

Romania's liberation, democratic development and prosperity; they can serve nothing but the interests of representatives of the old regime and the restoration of communism.

We are convinced that our society's prime need is for moral and spiritual renewal, and in the wake of this, social national and religious reconciliation. In this, our Churches can provide valuable assistance.

Moral renewal and national reconciliation are, however, inconceivable without the confession of past crimes and without moral and social justice for their victims.

We demand, therefore, that those guilty in the deaths of approximately one and half thousand victims of the 1989 genocide be called to legal account.

It is not just those Hungarians of the Szeklerland who participated - in good faith - in the spontaneous uprising of December 1989 that should be punished. The blood of our heroes and martyrs cries out to heaven for justice.

In the interests of Romanian democracy and of reconciliation within our society and between our peoples, our churches strongly support the realisation of recommendations put to Romania by the Council of Europe at the time of her entry. In particular, we urge that Bills on National Minorities and on Religion which correspond to European standards be placed before Parliament; that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Charter of Local Government be signed; that the establishment of schools using minority languages and of religious schools be permitted; that church property be restored; and not least importantly, that "the issue of releasing those persons imprisoned on political or ethnic grounds" be reviewed in a positive manner.

Finally, taking into consideration the country's democratic and pluralistic unity, we recommend the following practical proposals for consideration and debate:

- inter-ethnic and ecumenical friendship societies should be further developed throughout the country;
- the meetings of the ecumenical fellowship of churches in Romania should be resumed as a continuation of the first national ecumenical congress held in Cluj on 1 and 2 April 1993;
- an operative national round table for Romania's minorities should search for a permanent consensus-based solution to ethnic problems;
- a national bilateral inter-church forum should seek ways and opportunities for compromise between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches;
- a Ministry of National Minorities should be established;
- a mixed inter-denominational committee should be established to supervise inter-ethnic relations, to deal with conflict situations, and to mediate between conflicting parties;
- our churches, accepting the mission to inform and educate the public, should appeal to the faithful for reconciliation and fraternal love by circular letter;
- the churches should organise days of reconciliation in the village of Hodac, Mureş county;

May the name of God and the memory of those who died for Him be blessed!

May the grace of the Lord bring to fruition the endeavours of our churches and our people that are inspired by charity and understanding.

The Participants

15 December 1993, Timișoara

**To the participants in the Odorheiu Secuiesc meeting
to demonstrate for the unjustly convicted prisoners
from Târgu Mureș, Dealu and Zetea**

Brothers and Sisters!

Take a page from the Romanians' book. Ever since they announced the convictions of their countrymen at Tiraspol, they have come to each other's aid with demonstrations and protests, and everyone from the president to the least important citizen raises their voice in the other's interest.

I do not want to overemphasise the similarities between the two cases, nor in the present situation, are the differences important. I simply want to recommend to you the exemplary espousal of a brother's cause, the national solidarity, and the behaviour of the people involved.

When injustice is done, we cannot remain inactive and silent. We cannot just show concern for our unjustly suffering brothers' shame. We must speak out for them, for their release, and for their families!

This, we are doing today in Timisoara, when on the fourth anniversary of the dawn of Romania's changes, in ecumenical fellowship with Roman Catholics, Romanian and Serbian Orthodox believers, Reformed believers, Lutherans, Greek Catholics, members of the Mosaic faith, Baptists, and with members of other denominations, we raise our voices in the memory of the heroes and martyrs of the revolution mocked by some, and call for the investigation of the perpetrators of mass murder in the interests of nation-wide justice.

When the Pharisees wished to silence the disciples, Jesus replied to them, "I tell you, if they remain quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40) - I am happy that tens of thousands of signatories, and today's protesters do not allow the stones to cry out.

I would like to remind you that not so long ago, Europe at last spoke out. On the occasion of Romania's acceptance as a member of the Council of Europe, the preconditions specifically obliged the Romanian Government to "...review the cases of those convicted on political or ethic grounds" (Recommendation 7).

Convinced that Romanian and Hungarian concepts of justice coincide in the indivisible unity of the Gospel and of Europe, we demand this.

15 December 1993, Timișoara

Jewish-Christian Conference

1-4 February 1994, Jerusalem

The Lord “has a charge to bring” against his chosen people

Jewish-Christian Conference on Religious Leadership in a Secular Society Contribution to the Workshop: Ethnicity, Multi-Culturalism and Integration⁸

On the first day of the conference I had the feeling that in the discussion of our workshop theme, we had entirely missed a basic aspect, i.e. the biblical and moral approach.

I have the greatest regard for the lecturer who gave us a perceptive analysis of secularisation in our world. It was very informative to us all. However, from the very beginning he declared that he was “not a religious man” and later he stated that his “faith was culture itself”.

Professor Halper is an expert in anthropology and his expert opinion is very convincing. I do not think, however, that the world’s religious leaders met in Jerusalem solely to seek secular, purely scientific solutions to the challenges presented by a secular society, but rather to find answers and explanations rooted in the bible and theology, which accord with the special features of their own faiths. It would be quite paradoxical if even church people met and fought secularisation with merely ‘secular’ means and arguments.

I also feel that it is impossible to talk about the moral aspects of secularisation while disregarding the “moral dimension”, to which the lecturer also referred.

1. According to the Bible and to the prophets, a “secular society” is a society alienated and detached from God, a society which through disobedience has excluded itself from Jehovah’s Covenant, and has lost that solemn status characteristic of the life of the chosen people and of the faithful who trust God and follow His commandments.

As religious leaders and theologians, and as faithful disciples of the Lord we must not forget, but must always be aware of, the prophetic words which tell us that the Lord “has a charge” (Hebrew: *rib*) against his chosen people, an idea discussed by B. Gemser in his book *The Rib or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality, Vetus Test.*, 1955.

The prophet Hosea says:

“Hear the word of the Lord you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:

‘There is no faithfulness, no love,
no acknowledgement of God in the land.’”

(Hosea. 4:1)

⁸ Between 1-4 February 1994, bishop László Tókécs attended in Jerusalem a high-level ecumenical conference - in the framework of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the main issue being the role of the religious leaders in our secular world.

The “accused” named in this “charge” are the leaders of Israel: the teachers of the law, the judges, the chief priests and the Pharisees.

“And it will be: Like people, like priests, I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.” (Hosea 4:9).

As guardians of the Covenant we, the religious leaders of today must bear an enormous responsibility. God has a “charge” against us: we must account for all our failings. As the prophets of the 8th and 7th centuries BC have written, we must all account for the flock that God has placed under our care.

“They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain” - writes Isaiah (56:11).

“I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock” says Ezekiel (34:10).

However plausible or rationally pleasing the scientific analysis of secular society may be, we who know the Scriptures and proclaim the Word of God can not disregard God’s judgement on the people who have broken his Covenant, the morally based, prophetic social critique, the enunciation and observance of which carries with it the promise of conversion: to be “a light for the Gentiles” and to “justify many” (Isaiah 42:6 and 53:11).

2. In this spirit, and in the context of our workshop theme, I would like to raise the issue of ethnic minorities, a topic which I think was also neglected in our discussion yesterday.

At this conference, I represent a group of people from Romania who live as a minority in two ways; they are both an ethnic minority and a religious minority. The ethnic Hungarians in Romania (about 2 million in number) have to face both the aggressiveness of Romanian majority nationalism, and the aspirations of the Romanian Orthodox Church to predominate as the “National Church”.

Yesterday, the lecturer and the moderator of our workshop spoke in a rather abstract way about “conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups”. This scientific objectivity, under different conditions a very impressive approach, is in most of the cases at issue misleading. It gives the impression that both sides at issue are equally responsible for the situation and inclines one to think that solution of the conflict is a “rational” one depending on the mere “technicality” of mutual agreement. A great gulf lies between this “scientific” approach and harsh reality. The situation in the states of the former Soviet Empire and their successors is very different from the scientific model.

We should not forget that in the real situations, which lie beyond our well-intentioned theories, most cases are not just mere “conflicts”; they involve merciless oppression, ethnic and/or religious discrimination, a lack of tolerance towards minority communities, assimilation policies and sometimes even ethnic cleansing.

Seduced by the magic of science and the lofty conference atmosphere, we should not confuse the integration we long for with forced homogenisation.

It is unpardonable to discuss professional issues of “ethnicity” in generalities, while thousands of people - in Bosnia, for example - are being exterminated due to their ethnic identity.

These problems are not abstract conference issues; they cannot be discussed independently of morality.

When I criticise the way we are dealing with these problems and emphatically remind you of the situation of the ethnic and religious minorities in the post communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, among them the minority groups in Romania, I appeal not only to your scientific understanding of the problem, but also to your moral sensitivity and compassion.

As for the ethnic Hungarians in Romania, I would like to assure you that this ethnic group is genuinely committed to European integration and democracy; in consequence it does not want to be a party to any “ethnic conflict”.

At the same time, however, we need more than a fact-finding report, we need your moral support and assistance. We, like other oppressed minority groups, need the solidarity of the world’s churches and of international religious leaders. For as long as these minorities have to struggle, day by day, as the Jewish people once did, simply to maintain their identity and existence within a hostile, nationalist society, “integration” will remain a mere euphemism.

3rd February 1994, Jerusalem

Letter to Dr Octavian Buracu, President of the Association for Inter-ethnic Dialogue

Cluj

Dear Dr Buracu,

I thank you for the kind invitation to the gathering your organisation is holding in the memory of the historically important figure King Matthew, the symbol of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence in this land. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation not just of the work undertaken by you and your organisation, but more particularly of this open hearted initiative, which through its exceptional ethical bearing stands in direct opposition to the “monument sickness” currently raging in Cluj.

I am convinced that your prominent presence in Cluj is an important part of the process of national liberation and rebirth which began in Timișoara in 1989. This process has been characterised from its very beginnings by people of different nations and denominations finding one another. The falsification of the past and the manipulation of the masses’ sense of historical identity threaten to prevent the process from achieving the democratisation and social emancipation of Romania. This process can only be continued, made permanent, and fulfilled through the mutual understanding and common work of all those who are able to overcome national prejudice and oppose the use of divisive politics and ultra-nationalist propaganda.

We can state that there is no other alternative for any of us, for this country’s Romanian, Hungarian and German citizens, than “inter-ethnic dialogue” and national reconciliation.

May God grant that in the spirit of the statue of “Mathias Rex - Matthew the King” and the noble idea of the Cluj meeting, we will be able to overcome the hatred we have inherited from the past; the xenophobia, the insecurity and the cowardice, which this country’s post-communist regime gives life to, and which the extreme nationalist leadership of Cluj maintains.

May the Lord of Salvation bless all those who wish for peace and understanding in the city of historical monuments and throughout the world.

May God bless all the participants in the open air meeting at the statue of King Matthew.⁹

7 June 1994, Oradea

⁹ To the invitation of the Association for Inter-ethnic Dialogue on 8 June 1994, Bishop László Tőkés made a speech on the protest meeting for the protection of King Mathias’ statue. On the meeting organized on the main square of Cluj, the attendance of about 3000 Hungarian and Romanian people condemned unequivocally the subversive activity of Gheorghe Funar, the ultra-nationalistic Mayor of Cluj.

The General Assembly of the Reformed Church District of Királyhágómellék

6 June 1994

Statement on issue of religious and ethnic minorities

“The centre of extreme Romanian nationalism is Cluj”, asserted Dr. Octavian Buracu, President of the Society for Interethnic Dialogue in a press conference last month. This remarkable organisation, based in Cluj supports the process of reconciliation between ethnic groups in Transylvania and the fight against chauvinism. In one of its recently published protests, it made the following statement: “Fundamental human rights including the rights of minorities, are consistently and without the slightest hesitation trampled under foot in Romania.”

The validity of this statement is best exemplified by the anti-Hungarian policies being implemented in Cluj by the ultra-nationalist mayor, Mr. Gheorghe Funar. Mr Funar’s civic duty appears to include the violation of Hungarian statues and monuments, discrimination against Hungarian institutions and the stigmatisation of the many remarkable Romanian personalities who have expressed solidarity with ethnic Hungarians in Romania.

A concerted smear campaign has been under way in the Romanian press, which has targeted well-known Romanian intellectuals and leading personalities in the democracy movement such as Mrs. Doina Cornea, Dr. Octavian Buracu, His Excellence Nicolae Corneanu, Orthodox archbishop of Timișoara, and Mr. Andrei Marga, Rector of the “Babes-Bolyai” University in Cluj solely because of their impartial attitude towards ethnic minorities. Mr. Ion Aluas, ex University professor has been defamed even after his death.

In the spirit of Christianity by which all people are brothers and sisters in Christ, we would like to convey the sympathy of our church members, and declare, in the name of the Assembly of our Church District, our solidarity with those Romanian personalities who have become the targets of these anti-Hungarian attacks, and to thank them for the brave stand they have made. At the same time, we thoroughly condemn these anti-Hungarian displays, which receive the tacit or explicit support of the governing authorities, and express our continued commitment to Transylvania’s historic values of ethnic and religious tolerance and to the cause of reconciliation between Hungarians and Romanians.

Urged by faith and conviction, and bearing in mind democratic European norms and the fundamental interests of our country, of our peoples, and of the region as a whole, the Assembly of our Church District protests against this politically incited wave of Romanian nationalism we are currently experiencing.

We object to:

- the discriminative minority policies of the Romanian Government and Parliament;
- the influence on political life enjoyed by the extreme nationalist parties, and the unhindered and unashamedly xenophobic propaganda they produce against Hungarians and other minorities;

- the cult of Marshal Ion Antonescu, Romania's fascist dictator who was condemned and executed as a war-criminal, that this cult is tacitly supported by the authorities, and that his statue is being raised in Târgu Mureş;
- the use of Holocaust commemorations in Romania by Romanian nationalists as an opportunity for anti-Hungarian propaganda (e.g. in Oradea, etc.);
- the fact that ethnic Hungarians are excluded from administrative posts and removal from the economic domain;
- the illegal campaign launched by the centrally appointed county authorities to remove Hungarian language place signs;
- the fact that Mr. Pál Cseresnyés from Târgu Mureş, was condemned on political grounds and has yet to be released despite the undertakings made by Romania to the Council of Europe;
- the placing before Parliament of a discriminative Education Bill;
- the forcible alteration of Hungarian schools in Székelyföld and their conversion into Romanian schools;
- the intolerance of certain majority local authorities towards the minorities, and the resulting decisions;
- those actions of Mr. Gheorghe Funar, mayor of Cluj, aimed at provoking ethnic conflict;
- the planned removal of the statue of the Hungarian king, Mathias Corvin, presently in Cluj;
- the violation of Hungarian statues and historical monuments (in Cluj, Sighetul Marmăţiei)
- the removal of the memorial plaque erected in Cluj to József Bem, Polish revolutionary general in the 1848 War of Independence
- the harassment and threats of eviction made against the Cluj Branch of the German Democratic Forum;
- the planned renaming of the "Babeş Bolyai" University in Cluj.

Concerning issues specific to the religious minorities, we object to:

- the deliberate four year sabotage of the Bill on Religion, and to the discriminatory alteration of the original Bill by the Government to the disadvantage of the minority churches;
- state discrimination against the Hungarian churches and bias shown towards the majority Orthodox Church;
- the continued appropriation of church property in clear violation of the commitments made to the Council of Europe;
- the illegal retention of the Church District's Headquarters Building;
- the intentional manipulation of ecumenism to the disadvantage of the minority churches;
- the threatened interference in the church's financial affairs by the treasury;
- the manipulation of the Roma minority against our church.

We wholly condemn those Government and state policies which, continuing the practice of the Ceauşescu era, aim to mislead and deceive the West and public opinion to achieve membership of the European Community. The victims of Europe's indulgence are human rights and the ethnic minorities.

Our church feels justified to speak up for its faithful, Romania's disadvantaged citizens. Our endeavours accord with our church's teaching on social mission, with the universal prerequisites for democratic transformation, for a state based on the rule of law, for human and minority rights as well as, for the achievement of the original objectives of the revolutionary changes of 1989 which was begun with our church's active participation.

This Statement has been sent by the Assembly of our Church to the Romanian authorities, to democratic organizations and human rights institutions in Europe, and also to ecumenical organizations. We place this document at the disposal of democratic public opinion at home and abroad.

6 June 1994, Oradea

To the Member-Churches of WARC¹⁰

At their residence

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

On 11 April this year, the European Area Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met in Drienovec, Slovakia. On this occasion, a Statement was written which sharply criticised and shunned the plan to establish a Universal Hungarian Reformed Synod. This document included the assertion that “this church initiative may be seen as an encouragement to go beyond the realities of 1920” and the accusation that the initiating Hungarian speaking Churches “misuse the Christian faith for national ethnic purposes”.

The churches concerned have answered the allegations made in this document in full detail and have repudiated the insinuating and over-anxious statements of the European Area Committee. Although our churches do not doubt the good faith the World Alliance of Reformed Churches shows towards us, they consider the suspicion and mistrust surrounding our Universal Synod to be completely misplaced. (See the enclosed replies).

I do not wish, on this occasion, to deal in detail with all the issues and objections raised by WARC and the member Churches. I want only to comment on the critical remarks on national and ethnic issues.

First of all, I firmly reject the veiled allusions to irredentism.

We, Hungarian speaking Reformed people, have been forced to live apart and in other peoples' lands for more than 75 years. Almost half of the believers of our Church have been compelled to suffer the wrongs of oppressive nationalist regimes (in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union). Their endurance and faith have been severely tested by policies whose aim was to destroy their communities. In addition, the Hungarian Reformed Church as a whole has been subjected to 50 years of communist atheism. After these dark decades of oppression which threatened both our ethnicity and our faith, it is a miracle that - by God's grace - we do still exist.

Bearing this in mind, we feel deeply offended and upset that the Hungarian Reformed people who have been oppressed, persecuted for their faith, deprived of their properties, and denied basic human and minority rights are now subjected to suspicion, and baseless accusations by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

We do not wish to confront the WARC and our brothers and sisters living in prosperity and liberty for their “diplomatic” silence and - in general - insensitive behaviour in the past. We who live with minority status have long since learned that “those little ones” can only count on the concern and grace of Christ.

Nor do we wish to be ungrateful and forget the charity of our sister churches in the free world, and their readiness to help which we have experienced especially over the last few years.

¹⁰ WARC received with outerness and rejection the forming of the Universal Hungarian Reformed Synod. This letter supports the issue of the Synod.

We cannot accept, however, that the project of the Universal Synod, which arose out of the minority Hungarian Reformed Churches basic need for solidarity and fellowship, be put in question or even defamed. Do not forget that our minority Churches are still afflicted with aggressive majority nationalism in their countries, which threatens their very existence. This is one of the reasons the Reformed Church of Hungary continues to support them, morally and spiritually through, among other measures, the Universal Synod.

We also find it a little strange that while we speak about reconciliation between nations and religions, and while there is nothing to prevent ecumenical relationships between different denominations, our solidarity with “those who belong to the family of believers”, with the Hungarian Reformed people gives rise to suspicion and repugnance throughout the world. The point under discussion is however nothing more than the command we read in the letter to the Galatians: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (6:10).

It could be seen as irony of fate that those who belong to the Western

Reformed “ family of believers “ involuntarily levels the same charge at us as - for instance - the ultra-nationalist Romanian gutter press, namely: ethnic political purposes or even irredentism.

I have written this letter in the spirit of brotherly frankness and I would like it to end with the wish that our sister churches abroad do not obstruct our path to re-establishing fellowship between our scattered and oppressed Reformed Church communities, I ask instead that they support our plan to establish this Synod which has been guided by faith not national motives.

We submit this request to the next meeting of the Executive Committee of WARC in Pittsburgh. We hope a brotherly consensus can be achieved on these issues at the extraordinary meeting which we would like to call in agreement of WARC in autumn 1994.

Soli Deo Gloria!

8 July 1994, Oradea

The CSCE Review Conference

3-4 November 1994, Budapest

Speech

Mr Chairman!

The Reformed Church in Romania welcomes the unprecedented and increasing role of NGOs in the CSCE process. We hope that our continued involvement can enable the CSCE to become yet more effective and relevant in the lives of the people of our region.

As a church we feel we have a special contribution to make. The daily links we have with our 900,000 members can provide the CSCE with an unparalleled network of "co-workers." Our internal democratic structure enables their voice to be heard in the manner most appropriate to the CSCE.

As our members are traditionally drawn from the Hungarian minority in Romania we, along with the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran and Unitarian Churches, wish our members to live in peace with the Romanian majority. We have repeatedly stated that we have no revisionist or separatist aims, but are committed to democratic change, and to the movement towards a co-operative, secure and integrated Europe. For this reason we stand by human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right of minorities to self-government at all appropriate levels in matters that effect their ability to survive as a community. These would fundamentally advance the interests of the entire Romanian nation, and the democratisation of the country.

Often, however, the image of minorities propagated is that our very existence is somehow a destabilising factor; causes the revival of nationalism; and impedes European integration, co-operation, and security. In the case of Romania, however, history has shown that it was the desire for a new and better society, and our members' peaceful struggle to achieve it, that played the critical role in the 1989 revolution. The candlelight vigils begun by our Hungarian Reformed congregation around our church in Timișoara, were joined, night after night, by members of all communities of this multi-ethnic city. These peaceful protests proved to be a spark for the change that swept through our country. Our impetus to build a new society remains strong.

We would applaud the emphasis the Distinguished Representative of the Romanian Delegation has put on the development of an irreversible "legal and institutional framework," if guarantees for human and minority rights were an integral part of this framework - and not a later addition. The Romanian authorities argue that such rights are protected by Article 20 of our Constitution, which gives international legal standards precedence over national law when inconsistencies occur. In 13 of 16 cases, however, the courts have overruled local council decisions authorising bilingual place signs, without even referring to Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe.

As regards domestic legislation, the Romanian government has failed to get the agreement of the political representatives of the minorities on the Education Bill, and of the Democratic Coalition as a whole on its Privatisation Bill. It has destroyed the consensus among the churches on questions of religious freedom, and deliberation of a Law on Minorities did not even warrant parliamentary time. Facing a slim majority in parliament, and unable to achieve

a democratic mandate by coalition with the democratic parties, the Romanian government has resorted to coalition with the nationalist Party of Romanian National Unity. Such a coalition further diminishes the government's democratic mandate.

This lack of democratic political will is evidenced by the Romanian Delegation's statement, in which it confirms that the provisions addressing denominational education, and the return of church property, archives and artefacts, have been omitted from the government's Draft Law on Religious Cults and Religious Freedoms. All this despite the consensus achieved by Romania's churches on a prior proposal which had included these provisions

This lack of democratic will is further demonstrated by Romanian State Secretary for National Defence, Mircea Pascu's recent pronouncement that the Romanian army is in a position to be mobilised against the minorities, if it should be necessary. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. The Hungarian minority is subject to such intimidation on a daily basis; for example, from Gheorghe Funar, Mayor of Cluj and president of the aforementioned Party for Romanian National Unity. He has denied the very existence of the Hungarians, who make up 25 per cent of the city's population, and "advised" the same "non-existent" population to leave the country, as soon as possible, if it is so dissatisfied.

Mr. Chairman!

We thank the European Union for paying such close attention to the situation in Cluj, and the situation of minority education. We would ask all Participating States to ensure that the standards developed within the Helsinki process are more rigorously applied throughout the region to prevent the flourishing of such phenomena. The victims of indulging non-complying states are all too often human rights and the ethnic minorities.

4 November 1994, Budapest

International University Forum

8 December 1994, Budapest

Human and Minority Rights in Romania

The interest and help which the Spanish Helsinki Committee (Helsinki España), acting within the framework of the International Helsinki Federation, has given to societal change in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is in itself noteworthy and laudable.

As a representative of this area, I am even more pleased to see the establishment by the Spanish Helsinki Committee of the International University Network with its practical programmes and methods, which promise real help for the countries ravaged by Communism.

The Budapest University Forum complements in a positive way the work of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and with its sincerity and its lack of a political or prejudiced character, it can contribute to both the democratic transformation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which began with the changes in 1989, and to the recovery and consolidation of their economic and social lives.

In considering the Human Dimension, the theme of today's forum, Minority Questions and Freedom of Religion take an important place.

Romania is a country in which the issue of minority rights is one of the main impediments to progress; and in which, the solution of the minority problem is closely related to the treatment of minority churches, the members of which are drawn mainly from the ethnic minorities. That is, Romania's treatment of her minorities is strongly linked to the issue of religious freedom. Without the assurance of human and minority rights for the approximately 3 million Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Gypsies, etc., people who are both ethnically and confessionally in a minority, it is simply impossible to conceive of real democratisation in Romania or the creation of stability in Romanian society.

In 1989, I was minister of that Hungarian Reformed Church in Timișoara, whose resolute resistance to oppression provided the spark that kindled the revolution. In that multinational and multi-religious town, about ten ethnic groups and as many religious denominations live side by side. One of the secrets of the success of Timișoara's insurrection was simply that the different ethnic communities and religions joined together. One of the main pillars of the Ceaușescu dictatorship, on the other hand, was ethnic division - in the ideology of communist nationalism, divide and rule. It was no accident that the changes in Romania started with the joining together of different ethnic and religious groups around a minority church. It is also no accident that in the period since 1989, the Romanian authorities have used the divisive nationalism they inherited from Ceaușescu to restrain democratic transformation, limit human rights and basic freedoms, and thus preserve their dominant position in Romania's pseudo-democratic society, which has been very aptly called a "democratorship".

Two shocking demonstrations of Romanian human rights violations and of Romania's oppressive anti-minority policy were the ethnic clashes in Târgu Mureș, in March 1990, and the June 1990 miners' strikes in Bucharest. In neither case did the neo-communist authorities hesitate to use force or to provoke violence when seeing their power in danger. In both the suppression of the Bucharest youth movements, who were protesting against the communist regime, and the suppression of the Hungarians demanding their rights, the Iliescu regime

demonstrated its willingness to use drastic means to limit the role of minority and civil rights in the developing society. By doing so, they have left the Romanian people a lasting reminder of how far their liberty is to extend.

In the opinion of the eminent Romanian writer Octavian Paler, from Bucharest, a process of “organised non-agreement” is now evident in Romania. As an example, he points to the official organisation of the miners’ marches on Bucharest and of pointless ethnic conflicts. These centrally organised subversive activities and this state terrorism use division and fear to distract the attention of the citizens from the real problems of the country, and enable the government to control the bulk of the Romanian people. This evident manipulation, combined with the economic chaos in Romania since the changes, tends to compromise the concept of democracy, and provides a breeding ground for the openly dictatorial tendencies of the extreme nationalist parties.

The leader of one such party, the MP, C.V. Tudor, for instance, urges the introduction of dictatorship to “maintain order” in the country. That this is not only the dream of the extreme nationalists is confirmed by the fact that the Romanian National Unity Party, with its anti-Hungarian ideology, has recently been admitted into the Romanian government. The President of this party is Gheorghe Funar, the extreme nationalist mayor who has transformed Cluj into the operational headquarters of ethnic incitement and the artificial stimulation of tension. This crack-brained politician who introduced in his town a one-man dictatorship, told the discontented Hungarian electors they should leave the country, and recently suggested the military occupation of Budapest, as a Romanian province, if the Hungarians “do not mend their ways”.

I must emphasise again that this nation-wide incitement is pursued by the president of a party which is a member of the government. Nevertheless the Romanian Government has not once distanced itself from the staggering statements of the leader of a party which is a very component of this government. Why should it? After all even the president of the majority Romanian Socialist Democratic Party, Mr. Oliviu Gherman, indulged in a violent outburst against the Hungarian ethnic group, summoning all the Romanian parties to unite against the Democrat Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. Paşcu Mircea, Under-Secretary of State for National Defence, surpassed even that, and made a statement in which he held out the threatening prospect of possible military action against the minorities.

Likewise, in the report the Romanian Intelligence Service submitted to Parliament last month, the desire for democratic autonomy on the part of Transylvanian Hungarians is declared “dangerous” for the Romanian nation and “anti-constitutional” and of necessity should be scrutinised by the Secret Service.

We could illustrate with many examples the numerous anti-minority policies to be found throughout Romanian life. I will confine myself to drawing attention to the new Bill on Education, which surpasses even the former Ceauşescu-law in its anti-democratic, and discriminatory character. Romania’s Hungarians protested with approximately half a million signatures that the acceptance of the Bill on Education, which was passed by the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament would endanger their national identity. The Bill before Parliament is especially damaging to university teaching in the mother tongue. It prohibits the use of the mother tongue in every branch of education, except teacher training faculties.

To understand the situation more fully, we must note that the first Hungarian University was founded in Cluj in 1580. Its modern successor, the Bolyai University was closed in 1958 by Nicolae Ceauşescu - that is, he merged it with the local Romanian University. For decades the

Hungarian section of the merged Babeş-Bolyai University has been constricted. As a result, Hungarian scholarship in Romania has been suppressed, and the talents of Hungarian intellectuals have been wasted.

Mayor Funar, even today attempts to continue this Ceauşescu policy of assimilation, so much so, that even the half Hungarian name, Babeş-Bolyai offends him, and he wants the university to bear the Romanian name, Dacia Superior, which accords better with Romanian nationalist historical traditions.

The peace of the University has, in the last few years, been disturbed by the violent and provocative interventions of mayor Funar. To this day, however, the Rector, Andrei Marga, and the leadership of the university, who pursue the Transylvanian tradition of inter-ethnic coexistence, have been able to resist such nationalist diversions successfully.

The Romanian rector of the University is not the only one who has seen so clearly what is behind Funar's policy. Not long ago Doinea Cornea and Octavian Buracu, the leaders of the Civic League and Association for Inter-ethnic Dialogue in Cluj respectively, spoke up for the Hungarians whose basic human dignity has been compromised. Octavian Buracu, a committed fighter for ethnic reconciliation, pointed out in one of his protests "Fundamental human rights, including minority rights are trampled underfoot consistently and without any hesitation in Romania". The League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADO) recently related the following to the High Commissioner of the CSCE in Warsaw, "In the past few years, the Hungarian ethnic minority has had to endure yet greater oppression from local authorities; oppression that is encouraged by central government". The president of the League, Nicolae Ştefănescu Drăgăneşti, points out in one of his interviews: "Even at this moment, a centrally guided exclusion of Hungarians from different administrative and other managing levels is underway (in Romania)."

Recently Corneliu Coposu, the highly respected president of the Christian Democratic National Peasant Party characterised the Romanian situation as follows: "It would make no sense to speak about democracy in Romania. It is a dictatorial regime, or rather absolutism".

Given these respected opinions, Angel Martinez, President of the General Assembly of the European Council's statement that: Romania could be the international "model" for the handling of the minority question can be nothing but a successful result for the "outward appearance policy" of the Romanian Foreign Ministry.

The Romanian practice of "foaming nationalism" is diametrically opposed to the honestly held view the president has been given. Such a practice does not only sour the life of minorities by treating them as second class citizens, but also forms the main obstacle to the normalisation of Romanian - Hungarian interstate relations.

The victims of communist and nationalist policy of this kind are not only the minority communities, but also the Romanian nation. Evidently Romania's national communists, in their attempt to cling to power, are sacrificing democracy and the fundamental political interests of their own community in their policies of restoration. As the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania points out in one of its latest statements: "The ethnic tension nourished by President Iliescu, the Romanian Government and by some extreme nationalist parties is opposed to the interests of the citizens of Romania. It is destabilising in character, and renders Romania's integration into Europe more difficult."

Minority rights - by nature - constitute an organic part of the basket of human rights and freedoms. The description of a minority struggling for their rights as “enemies” and a “destabilising factor”, is nothing other than a political manoeuvre aimed at further depriving them of their civil rights.

The first period of the struggle for basic human rights in the spirit of the Helsinki process began in 1975, but it must be followed by a second period that develops the stress on minority rights in the International arena.

It is indisputable that in the period since 1989, in reaction to the Eastern European nationalism, which was then revived, a major leap forward has occurred in managing minority rights. Nevertheless in the developed West, and in power politics, the past is still strong: the lack of awareness of minorities and a misconception of the nationality problem illustrate this. Examples of this are the essentially ineffectual Western policy in Yugoslavia, and the West’s inability when faced with the nations and problems of the late Soviet Union.

The modern approach and strategy of the International University Initiative, within the framework of the CSCE process, is the right way to search for solutions. It opens the door to the solution of our real problems. However, I believe that more than an “opening”, a real breakthrough in the political approach of European organisations is needed - above all in regard to the problem of minority rights.

8 December 1994, Budapest

On the fifth anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989

In the Spirit of Timișoara¹¹

On the fifth anniversary of the December 1989 Popular Uprising in Timișoara, the events of that time still hold lessons for us on, among other things, ethnicity. I am convinced that Timișoara can provide the example, and the intellectual and spiritual starting point for inter-ethnic dialogue towards mutual understanding and national reconciliation.

In this regard, I would like to show three effects on this theme which originate in the exemplary message of Timișoara, and at the same time to warn that this message is increasingly being misunderstood, and misinterpreted due the political retrogression that has occurred since then.

1) In December 1989, the authorities, sensing their defeat, and fearing failure, used the state's entire propaganda apparatus to put across, in a premeditated and professional manner, the panic inducing misinformation that "the Hungarians are coming!" That Timișoara and the country as a whole are in danger from the "Hungarians".

This propaganda, which stopped for such a short time due to the fall of the dictator, has regained its place in Romanian society. What is more, it has been raised, either expressly or packaged in other measures, to the level of state policy. Our new leaders - I could just as easily say old leaders, as few of them have changed - work closely with their extreme nationalist accomplices to distract attention from the country's worsening plight, and to maintain their positions of power. Their tactic is to announce regularly with all the resources they can muster that the "Hungarian Danger" exists, and that the Hungarian minority - or rather their supporters in Budapest - are the root of all evil and every obstacle the country faces. These repeated suggestions give the Romanian masses an enemy image on which to blame the lack of change and vent their anger.

Five years ago, Timisoara unambiguously disproved the misleading and anti-Hungarian propaganda that the communists had spread. We can say nothing more apt about these disguised and misleading lies than we did then: It is not the Hungarians who cause the Romanians trouble, nor the Romanians who cause the Hungarians people trouble - both must join together and face their common enemies, the communists, who with their nationalist ideology have on the one hand ruined the country and on the other oppressed the Hungarians. The realisation and example of Timișoara is that, "They are our real enemies," and it resulted in all the town's ethnic and religious communities turning their strength in unison against the dictatorship. This was a unity that no divisive propaganda could destroy.

2) Secondly, the close collaboration between the churches of Timișoara, both then and to this day, deserves our respect and attention as a lasting example of brotherly fellowship. Today, the politics of division that are practised at national level can count disreputable successes also in the field of ecumenical church relations, and can hurl skillfully elicited inter-ethnic tension into the relations between the proclaimed "national" Orthodox Church and the minority churches; even despite such an unfavourable situation, the different religions and

¹¹ This opening speech of bishop László Tókéş was delivered on the international conference "Eastern and Central Europe after 1989", held in Timișoara between 13-15 December 1994.

Christian denominations of Timișoara stand unwaveringly together and, through their acknowledgement of a common faith and their unambiguous pledge of a common societal mission, take the guiding inheritance of 1989 forward in unison.

It would be misleading to idealise the official inter-denominational relations which stood in 1989. In the increasingly critical situation, the communist authorities still succeeded, despite several decades of ecumenical co-operation, in disturbing at least for a short time, what could be described as harmonious relations. But only for a short time! The people of Timișoara who were awake to themselves and their faith, who realised who they were, and what was true, miraculously found each other for the first time around the small church singled out to be a focus for hatred, there the churches, which the authorities had wanted to play off against each other, reunited in the spontaneous ecumenism of the popular uprising.

The people of Timisoara at that time fell to their knees, and in the freedom of God's open sky, with no denominational divisions, said together each in his own language and faith, the Lord's Prayer, and throwing off their fears declared "There is a God!" Our Liberating God, toppled not just the Berlin Wall that Advent, but in a blink, brought down the walls dividing us, so that the communities and religions divided to each's detriment, might find each other. May God save us from the possibility that the present authorities turn us from our path towards each other, and build new walls between us.

3) Timisoara's third message is closely connected with the preceding two, but its content and value extends far beyond both ethnic and religious relations and our own domestic situation.

In 1989 the "walls of silence" had to be broken down; the words and the truth that had built up within us for decades had to be - and were - spoken.

Today, when applied to the ethnic/minority situation, this lesson teaches us the following:

Things must be said aloud, the problems have to be named. Until we do this, we cannot count on any kind of change or improvement.

The bravery to speak is essential, we must take on the risk of speaking the truth, together with the risk of perhaps being mistaken.

In the communist era, minority questions were taboo. Towards the end, Ceausescu simply declared the minority situation as "solved forever", moreover, we Hungarians, if we were referred to at all, were referred to as "Romanians of Hungarian origin."

The situation is similar even today. President Iliescu describes the situation of the minorities in Romania as the best within the European framework. The authorities though, seem not even to want to notice our rightful claims, and in practise turn a deaf ear to even the mention of our problems, their response to these is empty words. At times they do not even recoil from showing their ability to frighten and threaten.

This situation cannot continue. It is wrong to silence, to deliberately misrepresent, and to oppress legitimate and democratic political efforts between the majority and minority. Dialogue means listening to one another without prejudice and bad intentions. The question of autonomy cannot simply be damned, and consigned to the Intelligence Service; it has to be a subject of political dialogue, and treated according to the game rules of democratic politics.

I repeat, worries, problems, and troubles must be said out loud. We can read in a poem by Gyula Illyés "Whoever states the problem has half solved it."

We must talk about the things thrown up by Timișoara and the revolutionary changes it has begun.

We must involve ourselves in the matters which the five year long ups and downs of transformation have put forward as the era's challenges to society.

We must consider our situation, and within it, the decades old poisoned relations of the Transylvanian minorities, as a historical and political problem, to which we can only find the solution, together, in societal unity, open dialogue, and constructive political co-operation.

9 December 1994

The theft and “cleansing” of the Romanian Revolution

The words that Dr Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of the Banat wrote to me come to mind as I read the Romanian language press coverage of the International Conference, organised by the “Királyhágómellék” Reformed Church District in Timișoara on 13-15 December, under the patronage of Doina Cornea, Imre Pozsgai and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and in particular the opinions expressed about me. His Grace wrote the following, “I feel deeply the pain that you are suffering as the victim of this libellous campaign. As you well know, you are not the only one to suffer. It is sad that it has become so habitual to threaten or if we are quite honest, to try and ruin non-conformist personalities in this way.”

For malicious intent, untruths, and ambiguous information and opinions, the prize on this occasion probably goes to the Bucharest daily Ziua.

From the very start, an advance article of 12 December, they have given space in their columns to vicious attacks. Under the title of “Leaders of the December Fighters demolish László Tőkés” (Liderii luptătorilor din Decembrie îl demolează pe Tőkés László) they ran a story undermining the Conference in Timisoara and myself. The only problem being that the existence of the organisation whose secretary issued the “protest” (comunicat de protest) is to put it mildly rather doubtful. At least, the leaders of the revolutionary organisations of the martyr town (singular), Timisoara, such as Dr Dragoi Mihai of the 17 December Association, and Vasi Calin Vasile of ALTAR had never heard of the purported organisation “the Consultative Council of the Fighters of the Martyr Towns of the Romanian Revolution” (Consiliul Consultativ al Luptătorilor din Orașele Martir ale Revoluției Române).

In Ziua of 16 December, the paper, exaggerating its own importance announced that I had “violently attacked” Ziua (Tőkés László ataca violent ziarul Ziua). In the same paper’s 19 December edition, we could read the falsehood that “exclusively the Hungarian language was used” during the Conference. The systematic misinformation also included two gross lies, according to which I am supposed to have admitted to having belonged to the Securitate, and that I supposedly referred to Viorel Oancea, Mayor of Timișoara as “unreliable” and apparently “told him to go to hell” (Dă-i dracului de escroc).

As the examples demonstrate, it is less some phantom leaders of the revolution whose prime aim was to demolish László Tőkés, and more the Ziua itself. This could explain the affection with which they quoted the phantom revolutionary organisation’s protest, that wishes with empty words and unfit accusations to deal me a decisive blow, by announcing that my intention in organising the Timișoara Conference was “to present myself as the country’s only revolutionary” (de a se erija în unicul revoluționar al țării), “and by doing so gravely insulting the revolutionaries and the memory of the martyrs” (ne jignește grav atât pe noi cât și memoria martirilor).

From the Greeting to Timișoara read by President Iliescu a few days later, it appears that the lines above reflect not the views of the named organisation, nor even of Ziua, but those of the authorities. While Iliescu mentioned no names, he expressed the following: “No one person or group has the right to make the Romanian Revolution exclusively their own, as this would be equal to scorn for the martyrs and the whole of society without which the Revolution could not be maintained.” (Quoted from the RMDSZ Executive President’s Media Observation Service).

A defamatory article in 21 December edition of Tinerama, follows the trend when it reports with satisfaction that my attempt in Timișoara “to promote myself as the country’s only revolutionary” did not succeed.

President Iliescu in one of his statements on the anniversary of the revolution also stated that certain people wish to steal and monopolise the Romanian revolution.

The events listed above very much remind one of the situation in which the thief cries thief. Who though is more likely to be accused of stealing the revolution than the Iliescu authorities which five years later, still make a cynical mockery of the sacrifice the revolutionaries once made? And who are the pen-pushers at Ziua and Tinerama more entitled to criticize for debasing the “memory of the martyrs”, none other than the regime which they praise so highly, which released every single one of the murderers of some one and a half thousand martyrs, and which step by step treads along the path to a restoration of communism?

The theft of the revolution is a reality. Only, the culprits are not those who Iliescu and the pseudo-revolutionary organisation fear them to be. The real thieves are those who harnessed the revolution to their policies of restoration and self-preservation, and arrayed with unequalled demagoguery in the colours of the “national revolution”, seek to arrest the course of social reconciliation, progress, and democracy.

The history of the last five years is no more than the story of the theft of the revolution. An organic part of this centrally organised process is the marked attempt to contest and to marginalise the role played by Hungarians in the revolution or rather to cast them as the enemies of the revolution. An example of this is the case of the rebels in the Szekler-land: the denigration and conviction of the people of Oroszhegy and Zetelak who revolted against the regime is in sharp contrast to the amnesty given to the Securitate secret policemen and the party officials who opposed the revolution.

The same purpose is behind the repeated anti-Hungarian attacks made during December’s anniversary commemorations. More specifically they are aimed at denying and mocking the role which I and the Hungarian Reformed Congregation of Timișoara played in the revolution.

How can anything in Romania be good, if it has anything to do with the Hungarians? is a question which reflects the mindset of Romania’s national communists.

The writer of an article in the newspaper Dimineața thinks in a similar way when he says that the “odious reverend Tőkés” (odiosul popa Tőkés) “launched an attack against Romania’s sovereignty” with his programme in Timisoara.

These are the attitudes and motives working on the theft and “ethnic cleansing” of the revolution. So, long live Iliescu, Romania’s Great revolutionary!

27 December 1994, Oradea

The Session of the Council of Representatives of the Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania

A Firm Proposal on the subject of initiating domestic dialogue between Romania's Hungarians and Romanians¹²

The joint agreement of the Romanian-Hungarian round table meeting held in Atlanta in February, was directed towards a continuation at home of the dialogue which was started at Atlanta. The high standing of the political personalities who took part in the agreement, and their positions in the government and respective political parties can be considered a guarantee that our Romanian partners, take the matter seriously, and genuinely wish to open a valuable dialogue. Nor can the honesty of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania's intentions on this point be doubted: they have for several years - since the Târgu Mureş Congress - been pressing for the organisation of a representative, consensus based, Romanian-Hungarian round table meeting, to provide a reassuring solution for the Hungarian community in Romania on the issue of minorities.

If the authorities see the Atlanta meeting to be to their political advantage, and are not ashamed to show themselves as believers in openness and dialogue, we should not let the opportunity go to waste. We should steadfastly urge the initiation of the Romanian-Hungarian round table talks, according to the framework of issues prepared in Atlanta. We must take the Romanian delegation in Atlanta at their word, and each official RMDSZ organ, body and officer should press for dialogue, with relatively high frequency and regularity, until the Romanian side fulfils the undertakings they made in Atlanta.

On the solution of the Hungarian minority question, we must be able to prove, just as the Hungarian government must on the issue of the Basic Treaty between Hungary and Romania, that if the settlement of Romanian-Hungarian relations is delayed or even becomes impossible, we have not been at fault. We would like to settle these problems with a European approach, and it does not depend on us if the realisation of this process occurs on more or less Balkan lines.

8 April 1995, Miercurea-Ciuc

¹² Between 7-8 April 1995, the Council of Representatives of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania held a conference in Miercurea-Ciuc. On this occasion Bishop László Tőkés urged the institutional beginning of the Romania's Hungarians and Romanian dialogue. His proposal was introduced into the decisions of the conference.

On the Funeral of Octavian Buracu

*“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,
and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*

(I. Corinthians 3:16)

We can call it an absurdity that after five years of Octavian Buracu’s revolutionary Mayorship, a person like Gheorghe Funar is now at the head of Cluj. This fact only adds to our deep mourning. The grave of Octavian Buracu shall stand as a symbol of our resolution against the extreme and depraved chauvinistic-nationalism. Despite the overwhelming influences that will lead to a communist restoration, the figure of Octavian Buracu is prominent in its almost unique quality. We mourn over the loss of a true Romanian who has won our unanimous appreciation by his impartiality towards other nations and for his active solidarity with the minorities of Romania.

I was devastated to hear of Octavian Buracu’s tragically early death. Apostle Paul’s words, from his First Letter to the Corinthians, come to mind: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I. Corinthians 3:16)

In the Holy Gospel, Jesus speaks about “the temple of His body” (St. John 2:21). This is what St. Paul reflects in the First Corinthian Letter - by this time with a general validity and meaning.

Applying this biblical metaphor to Octavian Buracu we may say that, according to the exceptional characteristics of his personality and humanity, he indeed was “the temple of God”. “Know ye not that?”

On the altar of this temple - in Octavian Buracu’s heart - the holy fire of Christ’s self-sacrifice was burning. According to the alignment of his faith, origin and Christian belief, he devoted his life to the reconciliation of nations incited against each other, after the changes of 1989. The Association for Interethnic Dialogue, of which he was president until his death, served this aim in an exemplary way and with an unimpeachable morality.

In the temple of his own life, on the altar of his own service, he sacrificed real values, that in this overturned society of forgotten values, chaotic transitions, godlessness and inhumanity, following the communist regime, Octavian Buracu’s human greatness ornamented by Gospel traits, and those values which are also determinative factors in social rebirth and Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

Octavian Buracu was characterised by an ardent love of justice. He did not subscribe to unilateral Romanian national interest. He also recognised and defended the legal demands of the national minorities in Romania.

His fidelity towards the Romanian nation and his patriotism were harmonious with his respect towards other nationalities. His Orthodox belief did not prevent him from undertaking the protection of minority beliefs.

He showed uncommon morality and political courage when going against the stream, he bore even the - false - mark of “betraying his nation”. He put into words the truth and he had the courage not only to express but to act in the spirit of this truth.

His solidarity towards the Hungarians in Romania, who are exposed to the siege of a continuous, unbridled, rabble-rousing propaganda, and his upholding of the banner of equality before the law for all minorities, places Octavian Buracu next to Lajos Mocsary, the great advocate for minorities in Hungary in the previous century.

Octavian Buracu's "temple of body" was destroyed by death. But we believe the words of Christ: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (St. John 2 :19).

Who serves and supports eternal values is heir of eternity - according to the promise of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

5 September 1995, Oradea

An alternative initiative on Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation

An Open Letter to Hungarian President, Árpád Göncz and Romanian President, Ion Iliescu

Mr President,

Within the framework of the discussions between the Central European heads of government which took place in Warsaw at the beginning of October, a meeting was held between Prime Ministers Gyula Horn and Nicolae Vacaroiu in which they jointly stated that since the matter of a basic treaty between the two countries had reached an impasse, and it seemed inopportune to reopen negotiations in the near future, a high level forum of experts may be created in connection with the three draft documents prepared by the Romanians as a basis for a historical settlement between Romania and Hungary.

Having regard to the proposed peace talks, and with the intention that the Hungarian community in Romania should be constructively involved in this process, I respectfully ask that in the interest of successful progress for the imminent talks, you give the following alternative peace proposal your special consideration, support, and bring every influence to bear to help it gain acceptance.

I ask that in place of the Franco-German Peace Settlement model the parties consider the Austro-Italian model (the South Tyrol model) as a standard which may be followed. I ask this for the following reasons:

a) The Franco-German model is not as relevant to the situation of Hungarians and Romanians as the South Tyrol model. While the agreement on the subject of Alsace-Lorraine was designed to resolve the revanchist relationship between the French and German states, the matter at stake in the Romanian and Hungarian relationship is not so much the interstate relationship, as the resolution of the situation affecting the Hungarian community in Romania, as was the comparable situation with the Germans of the South Tyrol.

b) The main obstacle to a historic Romanian-Hungarian peace settlement is to be found in the domestic relationship between the Hungarian community and the Romanians. It follows that any settlement must be effected within the domestic Romanian-Hungarian relationship, and not between the two states.

The only requirement, the only opportunity and the only way forward to a historic Romanian-Hungarian peace settlement in these circumstances is, as the well tried Austro-Italian model has shown, is the guarantee of individual and collective human rights, and the autonomous status of the Hungarian community in Romania. If, guided by an honest intention to settle and to provide a satisfactory solution to this problem, this course is taken, in conjunction with the signing of a legally desirable interstate Basic Treaty which guarantees a real and final solution to this problem, the existing problems will naturally be averted.

Another pressing reason urges the undertaking of my proposal. The Hungarians of Romania, as a community which has been present together with the German community as a constitutional and historical constituent of Transylvania and Romania for a thousand years, playing a decisive role in our country and our region's political, cultural, and economic development and civilisation, has no wish whatsoever to suffer the fate of the Alsatian Germans.

We wish to follow the route of social integration not assimilation, to becoming useful citizens of, and a creative community within Romania - the country in which we also actively played our part in shaping the changes of 1989.

Mr President, as early as the 1991 Târgu Mureş Congress, and later during the 3rd Congress in January 1993, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania has advocated the calling of a bilateral Romanian-Hungarian round table meeting in order to “resolve forever our common affairs” based on the principle of consensus, and which at the same time “could provide a secure basis for a Romanian-Hungarian interstate peace settlement.” The Hungarian Christian churches together with the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania are working unceasingly towards the achievement of this reconciliation and a bilateral accord between the two nations.

Mr President, please reflect upon the respectful alternative peace proposal which I have made, and in which I have paid close and equal attention to the interests of both Romanians and Hungarians. I believe that this proposal avoids the dead end of an illusory reconciliation, and the cul-de-sac of wishing to compensate for the failure of the basic treaty, and that it provides a realistic opportunity for a genuine historical settlement.

31 October 1995, Oradea

Presentation on the sixth anniversary of the popular uprising of Timișoara in 1989¹³

The Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation

In the six years since 1989 many disappointments and trials have prepared our hearts for our current, at times hopeless, plight. We have had to live through our old masters' theft of the revolution. The sacrifice of our youth and heroes has become a subject of disgrace. The authorities who support their murderers have cashed in the truth they suffered to attain for the small change of daily politics. The dictatorship has put on democratic colours. The spirit of Timișoara, our late ardour, has abated.

Over the last few years, the goodwill and countless attempts of the revolutionaries and supporters of true change have been a failure. The renewed attempts of initiators of national reconciliation have met the same fate.

This failure can be attributed not least to that person who used communist inventiveness to exploit the opportunities offered by the present political situation to the full. He has been able to cling permanently to power, and by abusing the power he gained through the sacrifice made by others, he remains, as the president of the country, the main obstacle to the social change that began in 1989.

President Ion Iliescu not long ago proposed a high-faulting initiative for a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation. Judging by what has gone before, and being aware of the present situation, we have every reason to question the seriousness of this initiative. The loan of confidence which we gave him six years ago, together with the credentials he so cheaply obtained have been pretty much squandered.

However, given the inter-ethnic tensions that Ceaușescu's methods so successfully raised to their present levels, and being aware of the dangers these present, it would be an ill-afforded luxury to disregard any attempt at reconciliation the country's president might make. Wedged into this critical situation, without any real alternatives, we must cling to every opportunity for discussion in the hope that it will improve the situation.

These were the considerations that prompted me to put forward an alternative proposal for reconciliation in my open letter of 31st October this year. "Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" - says the Apostle, "...but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:16,17)

I feel it pleases the Lord, that even in the present "evil times" we do not flag in our search for a solution, and that we use every opportunity we have to push towards national reconciliation, using God's reconciling love, we face the hatred heaped upon us "with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2 Cor. 6:7). And this feeling is stronger in me here, in this city, because it remains my unshakeable conviction that Timișoara can be the model and starting point of that inter-ethnic dialogue which has as its aim national reconciliation the basis of mutual understanding.

¹³ This speech was delivered in Timișoara at the gathering to remember the revolutionary events of Timișoara in 1989. Dr Nicolae Corneanu, Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan of the Banat, opened the gathering with a paper of remembrance.

When, in the second half of the last century, the Austro-Hungarian Settlement of 1867, which discarded the most advanced ideas of the 1848 Revolution, was signed over the heads of, and at the expense of the empires and other nationalities (among them the Transylvanian Romanians), there lived a man, the well known Transylvanian historian László Kóváry, who, as the committed supporter of national autonomy turned his back in protest on Hungarian pan-national power-politics, unceasingly maintaining his conviction that the only chance for understanding and reconciliation was if “a policy of love is declared in Transylvania.”

It is indeed true: nothing is more unfamiliar to Transylvania’s centuries old toleration than the exclusiveness of the nation state, championed by Romania’s present day power-politics. On his recent American journey, President Iliescu himself, asserted incessantly, that he is the supporter of the French type, centralised, assimilating nation-state. It is no accident, therefore, that in one of his television interviews he compared Romania’s Hungarians with those Senegali immigrants who upon settling in Paris are immediately regarded as French.

This limiting national exclusiveness offers explanation enough for the attitude of the Presidential Office, and of Traian Chebeleu, Presidential Spokesman, to my alternative proposal for Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

Traian Chebeleu “showered one of the Bishops of the Reformed Church with an unbelievable torrent of slander “ asserted Béla Markó, the President of the DAHR, who in his open letter to President Iliescu justly asks the question: “Is it conceivable that this style, these epithets will contribute to the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation you have also initiated?... or rather is this the way to sustain the tension?”

The President’s spokesman also made similar slanders, both specifically and indirectly, about the DAHR as a whole, which he accompanied with the following epithets and descriptive phrases: extremist, segregationalist, totalitarian, Hitlerist, Stalinist, vulgar, intolerance, fundamentalism, the spreading of lies. Nor has Mircea Geoana, the Foreign Affairs Spokesman fallen far behind his colleague, the Presidential spokesman, when it comes to name calling.

The Centre of International Studies in Bucharest has justifiably taken a stand on this sort of conduct, as well as on the Iliescu appeal for reconciliation. They said: “The Romanian President, Ion Iliescu’s suggested - Franco-German - model for reconciliation is contrary to the spirit to which he appeals”; further: “ The Romanian authorities’ behaviour contradicts the statements they have made concerning their reconciliatory intentions.” Mrs. Doina Cornea, though, expressly condemned the presidential suggestion for “ historical reconciliation” as demagoguery.

It is clear both from the views and assessments I have quoted, and also from the reply I received from his spokesman, that the one-sided and destructive behaviour of President Iliescu and the present Romanian authorities shows a living disavowal of the honest purpose of reconciliation. The hatred provoking, slanderous and propagandist voice indicates that Mr. Traian Chebeleu’s official letter was not in fact intended to be an answer, but as a nationalist deception of the public. The Presidential Office’s text puts “unreasonable tempers” in the place of “common sense” it helps to instil anti-Hungarian feeling, and feeds ethnic contempt. By refusing so vehemently an alternative proposal made in good faith, the President’s Office has proved that it does not want to engage in discussion, it is not interested in the opinion of those - the Hungarians of Romania - with whom it should be seeking reconciliation. In fact it does not want to solve anything, since, as spokesman Chebeleu asserts:” the situation of the persons belonging to the Hungarian national minority in Romania is abnormal only in the sense that the rights guaranteed to them considerably exceeds European and international stan-

dards.” The Presidential Office’s denial raises the ghost of late dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu’s stubborn obsession that “ the problem of national minorities in Romania has finally been resolved”. If that is so why is there a need for a basic treaty and for reconciliation? The official Romanian standpoint both at base and in effect remains unchanged to this day.

Finally we have to agree with Mrs. Doina Cornea, in whose opinion Iliescu’s reconciliation proposal’s “hidden aim is to conceal the fact that the President does not wish a Romanian-Hungarian Basic Treaty to be signed.” and “instead of a treaty with legal authority, he proposes a reconciliation statement which does not guarantee anything at all”

Mr. Horia Rusu, President of the Liberal ‘93 Party holds a similar opinion. He says: “The authorities come forward with an empty substitute without legal value, which may well create new problems in the debate concerning the basic treaty.” Mrs. Smaranda Enache’s opinion is that President Iliescu’s only intention is to mend his damaged reputation abroad with his proposal.

All the signs suggest that there is still no real political will among those in authority in Romania to clear away the obstacles to reconciliation and to solve the problems which poison the Romanian-Hungarian relationship.

Otherwise how are we to understand the 30th August statement concerning President Iliescu’s reconciliation proposal which said: the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania can not be the subject of negotiations with any country. Another old communist ghost: the Ceaușescu doctrine of “non-interference in the domestic affairs of the country” is haunting in this sentence concerning the minorities.

The Centre of International Studies in a profound analysis hallmarked by the names of Gabriel Andreescu, Valentin Stan, and Renate Weber illuminates the fact that the authoritative documents of the OSCE, the European Union, the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe, have superseded the Romanian idea that minority problems are exclusively within certain countries’ domestic spheres. It follows that these international norms must also compel Romania to follow the road to integration.

It appears from analyses of the proposal concerning a Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation and of the official Romanian statements on this subject, that due to a lack of want and political will on the one hand, and of openness and readiness to talk on the other, there is little chance or prospect of reconciliation.

As the President’s proposal’s bias to the French-German model suggests, and the reservation the Presidential Office has regarding any other proposal implies, there is “not one blissful way” to solve grave political questions and crisis.

Similarly the Romanian authority’s doctrine of principled ideal constraints does not favour development either. For what are we to do with such limitations. Reconciliation is valid only for the Romanian and Hungarian state’s relationship and can’t have anything in common with the Hungarian minority’s condition in Romania. Whereby the Romanian partner angrily and stubbornly precludes even the possibility that the two million member large Hungarian minority in Romania should have a word in Romanian-Hungarian relations, and one after the other they passionately reject her reconciling initiatives.

Or: how much space does that restricted and ill willed understanding which in advance identifies collective minority rights with territorial separatism. It also in advance brands all those who think in these political terms as “extremist and anti-Romanians ?

The representative organisation of the Hungarian minority in Romania, the DAHR, stated that openness, unconditional discussion, and consideration of every option for settlement and alternative solution is indispensable to the realisation of a Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

In this sense President Iliescu's suggestion of the French-German model is only one of the possible patterns. Similarly, although regarding our special situation, the Italian-Austrian, that is the South-Tyrol model is more suitable to our case. According to the views of DAHR President Béla Markó, it would be more desirable to work out a particularly Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation model, since every "particular situation demands a particular solution". Our Alliance is completely open to every solution put forward.

In an interview, the Finnish Ambassador to Budapest said the following about the Finnish-Swedish model: "This model is based on wide range autonomy, self-government and on rights guaranteed by the State". Considering their advantages and proven effectiveness, we prefer those solutions which are based on some form of minority autonomy, as these would guarantee the effective protection of the Hungarian minority in Romania on the one hand, and Romania's territorial safety and sovereignty on the other. Such a solution could remove the last obstacle, on which the signing of the bilateral basic treaty has floundered, and placing it on a path to peaceful resolution of Romanian-Hungarian inter-state relations. "

The working forms of autonomy in Europe must be examined, stated György Schöpflin a Political Scientist at the London School of Economics, and used to develop a specific consensus based status for the Hungarian community in Romania. I can only repeat what was written in my open letter to President Iliescu: " the only way, conditions and opportunity for a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation is to guarantee the Hungarian community in Romania an autonomous status, individual and collective human rights. "True legal equality between Romanians and Hungarians in Romania, we may add in the words of Béla Markó, could be," the cornerstone of the historical reconciliation between Romania and Hungary.

We must seek solutions that do not favour ethnic assimilation, but rather further the cause of collective social integration. "The Hungarian ethnic group in Romania neither wants to emigrate nor wants to be assimilated", we agree with Edgar Balogh, "it would rather stay as a constituent of the nation endowed with collective rights and seek a regional agreement with the Transylvania's majority Romanian population".

For these reasons we prefer those European regional solutions, the models of autonomy and self-government which submit to the universal basic principles of democracy (e.g. subsidiarity, decentralisation, regionalism, the principle of self-government, minority group rights) and are able to guarantee the preservation of our national identity and our continued existence in our homeland.

We are aware that the situation of the Swedes in Finland, of the Germans in Italy, of the Danes in Germany, of the French, Flemish and Germans in Belgium has been settled with wide ranging autonomy. In Spain, alteration of the state structure made it possible to give independent status to the large Catalan, Basque and other minorities of North West Spain, which was also advantageous to the Spanish states sovereignty. In Switzerland four official languages prove the viability of a state-structure built on the emancipation of the state-forming nations.

According to Wilfried Martens, ex-prime-minister of Belgium, MP to the European Parliament "the temptation of secession" is diminishing for minorities by the granting of autonomy. The European examples above, show that there is no real basis for the Romanian Authorities'

fear of autonomy as a step towards territorial separatism. According to Martens, “absolute national sovereignty” is no longer suitable for the political and economical realities of today but rather “restricted sovereignty”.

“Autonomy is a ‘deal’ between the majority and the minority”, says Mr. Csaba Tabajdi.

The DAHR has over the years pushed for such a consensus-based bilateral Romanian-Hungarian roundtable conference that would “settle our common affairs and provide a “firm basis for the Romanian Hungarian interstate agreement; it could also be a decisive “forum for Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.”

We are aware that, in their common homeland, Romanians and Hungarians can not succeed without each other, or against each other, or separately. Our Hungarian community is endeavouring as a community of Romanian citizens to reach such a political “deal” and has made a proposal to the majority Romanian nation (i.e. the DAHR to the Romanian state) which besides guaranteeing the country’s territorial integrity, would guarantee the complete equality of the Hungarian community with the Romanian nation, its individual and collective rights, and finally the protection of its national identity.

This “deal” seems to be the most accessible way towards a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation, towards security, stability and the peace of Romania and Hungary.

15 December 1995, Timișoara

Open letter

Mr Ion Iliescu
President of Romania
Bucharest

Mr Árpád Göncz
President of the Republic of Hungary
Budapest

Mr President,

Greeting with joy the announcements made by leaders of the Hungarian and Romanian Governments, in which the High Contracting Parties report on the rapprochement reached between them on the subject of the signing of a bilateral basic treaty and their movement towards a historical reconciliation, and in which they give notice for the continuation of talks on these subjects in January of this year. Referring to my alternative proposal for reconciliation of 31 October 1995 and the related complimentary proposal made by Béla Markó, President of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, on 15 November of last year, and his subsequent Statement to the DAHR Council of Representatives on 19 November 1995, commending to your attention my lecture on the subject of reconciliation held in Timișoara on 15th December of last year, and to its political repercussions, and keeping in mind the documents on reconciliation distributed by President Ion Iliescu in September of last year, as well as the constructive draft documents recently presented by the Hungarian Side,

I respectfully submit the following supplementary proposal on the subject of a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation to you, and to the foreign ministries of Romania and Hungary:

1. The reconciliation which both sides so fervently desire cannot be restricted to the Romanian and Hungarian states, but must primarily be made between the Romanian and Hungarian nations.
 - a) The conflict between the Hungarians in Hungary and the Romanians in Romania has a rather technical and theoretical character and so does not endanger the security of the two states or the stability of our region. Co-operation is possible when the following prerequisites are present.
 - b) The border issue: The main obstacle to a historical reconciliation between the Hungarian and the Romanian states has been cleared. In the bilateral draft basic treaty, a provision dealing with this issue was included which was acceptable to both parties.
 - c) Common interests in economics, politics, security, etc., but most importantly a common interest in European integration urges the Hungarian and Romanian states, and the Hungarian and Romanian nations to make a historical reconciliation.
 - d) The greatest obstacle to reconciliation between the two nations is the unresolved situation concerning the minority community of Hungarians in Romania. The bilateral basic treaty also foundered on this point.

e) The principle of reciprocity cannot be applied to this controversial minority question, since on the one hand, the Republic of Hungary has resolved its own minority situation by legislation, the same is yet to occur in Romania; on the other hand, the Romanian minority in Hungary is on the whole satisfied with its situation, and has not put forward any significant demands.

It follows that the only real obstacle preventing reconciliation between the Romanian and Hungarian nations is the reconciliation between the Romanian nation in Romania, and the Hungarian national minority in Romania. This can be the only real starting point toward a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation.

It is on this point that the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation differs from the Franco-German model. The conflict between Hungarians and Romanians is far removed from Franco-German state revisionism and its related border questions, it is in essence a question of minorities. It follows that, since no controversial border question exists, a solution to the historical conflict between Romanians and Hungarians is one and the same as resolution of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

2. Examining the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation question from the perspective of historical rapprochement, the following must be addressed:

a) The Trianon Peace Dictates (1920) were at least as injurious to the Hungarian state as the Dictate of Vienna (1940) was to the Romanian state. It was therefore unfair of President Ion Iliescu in the proposal for reconciliation which he made in connection to the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Dictate to make his one sided references to the historical sins of the Hungarians.

b) Similarly, the Hungarian minority in Romania is at least as affected by current state nationalism as the Romanians of Transylvania who once suffered as subjects of Hungarian oppression. It is unfair to raise only the issue of injuries suffered by the Romanians.

c) Thirdly, it is again one-sidedness which leads Iliescu to talk exclusively of the victims of the four year Hungarian "invasion" (1940-1944), in that on a historical scale - or even when considering this century alone - there has been as many Hungarian victims of violence as there are Romanians.

Taken altogether, it is clear that Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation can not be based on the reciprocal injuries of the past. With this in mind, it is evident that President Iliescu's starting point of one-sided political injuries is completely irrelevant. The Franco-German model he proposes, in fact, supports the view that real reconciliation between two nations begins by going beyond the reciprocal injuries of their common past.

3. From the postulate of a Romanian Hungarian Reconciliation springs the following important question: In reality, who is the injured party? In other words, and interpreted to fit the subject in hand: who in reality are the political actors in the historical settlement?

From what has been said above, it is noticeable that:

a) Both the Romanian and the Hungarian states are prepared to end the debate over their mutual border, and by doing so, finally brush aside the greatest obstacle to a historical reconciliation between the two nations.

b) The common interests in Euro-Atlantic integration, which is the primary aim of both countries, naturally brings Romania and Hungary together and makes reconciliation yet more worthwhile.

c) The historical debate based as it is on reciprocal injuries and rooted in the past of the Romanian and Hungarian nations can be settled if there is a will to do so on both sides.

Bearing this in mind, Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation is reduced to an issue of reconciliation between the Romanians and Hungarians of Romania. In this respect the political and legal subjects of historical settlement are - primarily - the Romanian nation, and the Hungarian community in Romania.

With reference to a preceding, high level, interstate debate, we can go so far as to say that Romania's road to Europe does not lead through Budapest, nor does Hungary's route to European integration run through Bucharest: the road leading from the two countries to Europe passes straight through Cluj, the historical, political and regional centre of Transylvania, that area of Romania in which the Hungarian minority lives.

4. It is essential that we recognise the truth in an expert opinion which states:

“It would greatly ease the inclusion of the minority problem in a treaty (between Romania and Hungary) if a relationship of partnership and reconciliation in the form of a wide ranging social and political contract could be achieved between the legitimate representatives of the Hungarians in Romania and the Romanian political classes.”

(Gusztáv Molnár & Gáspár Bíró: The Romanian Reconciliation Proposal)

We could add the remarks of Béla Markó, President of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania: “This could be the first step in the realisation of an original Romanian Hungarian Reconciliation model” (viz.: Béla Markó's letter of 25 November 1995 to President Ion Iliescu).

In this respect, the originality of a Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation would lie in the agreement of the “Romanian political classes” and the legitimate representatives of the Hungarian community in Romania to a contract of reconciliation and partnership, and later the inclusion of this contract in the interstate reconciliation documents.

In accordance with this, the first document of the draft bundle which President Iliescu distributed in September of last year, met with a favourable response from the Hungarian side, and was suitably added to them, that is, the Joint Declaration, would unequivocally read:

“The Parties consider reconciliation between the Romanians and the Hungarians of Romania to be an indispensable condition of the Romanian-Hungarian historical settlement, and will hasten with a common will to achieve this through the summoning of a round table conference between the Romanians and Hungarians of Romania, that is, the signing of the Romanian-Romanian Hungarian Accord.”

This agreement, which could be expressed in the Joint Declaration, would naturally, in the appropriate way and to the appropriate degree become effective through the interstate documents on which the talks and the reconciliation would be based, including the basic treaty between Romania and Hungary.

5. This initiative is in complete accord with the Hungarian and Romanian Parties' political intentions and interests, and their aim of reconciliation, and not least with the DAHR's repeated proposal for a bilateral Romanian-Hungarian round table meeting.

It has the added advantage that it proposes a compromise solution for the treatment of what is primarily an internal question: that of the Hungarian minority in Romania, while respecting the internationally accepted principle that minority questions cannot be treated by any country as exclusively a domestic affair.

Not least, this proposal takes into account the movement in European and international politics which is taking place in the direction of recognising collective minority rights and autonomy. On this point it is sufficient to refer to the new American peace initiative in the Balkans, which goes beyond even that contained in the Carrington Report with the wide ranging ethnic autonomy it guarantees. Richard Holbrooke, the United States Deputy Secretary of State said the following in Washington last August, "We have repeatedly made clear - as Secretary of State Christopher also has, during the Geneva peace process - that the rights of every ethnic group and every individual must be respected".

Keeping both the basic interests of the Hungarian and Romanian nations in mind in connection with the Romanian-Hungarian historical reconciliation, and taking into consideration the universal values and interests of European integration, and of the peace, security and stability of our continent, the Hungarian community of Romania makes this proposal to the Romanian nation - Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania to the Romanian State - and by doing so attempts to reach a political compromise which will guarantee the integrity of our country and the complete equality of Romania's Hungarians, as well as the respect for individual and collective rights, leading to the protection of the identity of our communities.

This "deal" promises to be the most passable road towards realisation of the Romanian Hungarian historical settlement, which President Iliescu has proposed, the Hungarian Side has embraced, and which Europe strongly supports.

This road best fulfills the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania's most recent Declaration which states, "We must search for and find the model for reconciliation between Hungarians and Romanians: this original situation requires an original solution."

6 January 1996, Oradea

Timely Expectations

From the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the European Area Council

I should start my report to the 15-18 March Geneva Meeting of the Governing Body by saying how important WARC is to us, what purpose WARC and the EAC have in the universal community of Reformed believers, and in this community's relationship with our Reformed Church in Romania, and how they fulfil this role. In this regard, I would just like to emphasise that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has only become real to the churches on the other side of the Iron Curtain since 1989. It follows that the current period is nothing less than a period of integration into the Alliance for churches of Central and Eastern Europe. The political changes have found us unprepared, and we must invest a great deal of effort into becoming worthy members, both organisationally and in the spiritual community of the large international family of Reformed Churches. Turning now to our expectations from WARC and the EAC, I should firstly offer an answer to points 2 and 3 of the SWOT analysis,¹⁴ that is the issue of WARC's "weaknesses" and "opportunities". Since our opinion on these issues can in many respects already be found in the many answers given by the other churches, I would like to restrict myself in this report to saying that which is new, different or additional.

1. First, I would like to raise the question of reformed identity. The weakening of the reformed identity is part of the general identity crisis of our era. The most common form of this lack of identity is consistently demonstrated in over-compensating ecumenical behaviour. WARC should begin a process of theoretical, theological and sociological clarification in order to proclaim, protect and strengthen our identity as Reformed Christians.

2. The general identity crisis mentioned above is particularly significant on the continent of Europe. Clearly the "master" of this issue should be the European Area Council. The EAC, struggling as it does with confusion about its role and function may, among other ways, possibly find itself through addressing this specific problem.

3. The issue of national minorities is also primarily within the territory and authority of the EAC. Naturally this does not imply that minority problems outside Europe and different from our own are any less deserving of attention, nor that WARC as a whole does not have a role to play in this area. I consider however, it essential that this difference in emphasis be highlighted in any approach to Europe or rather Central and Eastern Europe.

4. Sensitivity to minority problems, which threaten even the existence of churches living in Eastern Europe is even more possible and necessary following the breakthrough at Edinburgh (September 1989). In our opinion, the issue of minority rights deserves, due to its exceptional importance and moral weight, to be treated at the same level as human rights are. Although important steps have been taken in this direction over the last few years, we still feel that the matter of ethnic and religious minorities still lies in the background of international political and church life.

¹⁴ The SWOT-analysis is the issue of WARC's "Strength", "Weakness", "Opportunities" and "Threats" on the evidence of the analysis of its member churches.

5. The problem of communism and nationalism is closely connected to the minorities issue. Milan Opocensky, the Secretary General of WARC, made clear in his speech at Edinburgh last September that “There are situations, events, and developments which because of faithfulness to Jesus Christ require a clear answer.” In my opinion, communism is one of these. Criticism of communism and as importantly the self criticism that this will involve, comprise part of the WARC and the EAC’s duties of the era. Naturally this criticism cannot be expected just of WARC.

6. The reincarnation of nationalism as part of the process of communist restoration, is a specifically post-communist phenomenon. It is for this reason that WARC and the more directly effected EAC should turn their attention to the implicit and explicit connection between the two, and on the basis of this, develop adequate and differentiating positions on the matter of majority nationalism, and on the ethnic and religious minorities threatened by it. Our struggle to defend ourselves must never be confused with the majority policies of assimilation and discrimination.

7. Starting from this important precondition, I would ask the EAC to work more in the future to protect the minority member churches of Central and Eastern Europe, and through working with different international ecumenical organisations, to make initial steps to push forward the process of national and denominational reconciliation. The greatest obstacles to the Gospel duty of peace-making are at present a communist-style manipulation, and large scale disinformation.

8. Finally, I would like to express the general necessity for churches of Eastern and Western Europe to draw together. Due to historical, cultural, and most of all political factors, the churches once divided by the Iron Curtain remain in many respects on different sides of a gaping divide. With the application of effort on both sides, we should develop a strategy to bridge the differences and tensions that divide and separate us. After which we should be able to say in the words of St Paul, “...now in Christ Jesus, we who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” (Eph. 2:13)

14 March 1996

On the Hungarian National Holiday

15 March 1996, Oradea

Appeal

Though in an altered form, the ideas, programs and aims of 15 March, 1848 are highly topical today - especially in Transylvania, in the life of the Hungarians relegated to minority status by the tide of history. Applying the twelve headings of the youth of March to our situation, we can also ask: "What does the Ethnic-Hungarian community in Romania require"?

As 148 years before, it requires peace, freedom and harmony for Romania. The Ethnic Hungarian people require peace and harmony with the majority Romanian population. With free conscience, they take firm steps against the disturbers of the peace, the contending and the anti-peace people who even try to use the Hungarian national holiday for anti-Hungarian rabble-rousing propaganda and for stirring up hostilities.

The twelve headings drew up the demands of the age regarding social justice, ethnic self-determination, human rights and civil liberties, freedom of press and speech, and also national unity. These requirements and demands became part of the programs of the Ethnic-Hungarian community in Romania according to our particular situation under suppression. We are struggling for the realization of our ethnic self-determination, personal and community autonomy. We claim for the recognition and assurance of our minority rights together with the human rights. We reject national and confessional discrimination. Respecting the present-day borders, we are adherents of the restoration of Hungarian national unity. We want liberty, equality and fraternity with the sacred watchword of "Universal freedom" (Sándor Petőfi).

We wish the historic reconciliation between Romania and Hungary, respectively between the Hungarian and Romanian nation. But to the present-day interpretation of the eleventh heading, one of the most important conditions to this is to release the political prisoners.

In the spirit of the Revolution of 1848, we claim the relief of those who were condemned for serious imprisonment not properly for political reasons but only because they were Hungarians. We claim the immediate release of Pál Cseresnyés, respectively of Márton Bíró, Lajos Boros, Balázs Gergely, Sándor Jakócs, József Péter and Sándor Szabó, inhabitants of Zetea, who were forced to emigrate because of their simple attendance in the revolutionary events of December 1989.

We want to be free on our native land. Our freedom is limited and threatened by the massive settling of the Romanian armed force in regions and localities inhabited in majority by ethnic Hungarians, this being done for the sake of changing the proportion of nationalities and for frightening the ethnic Hungarian population. We claim the stopping of this process of colonization, to restore peace and agreement on the places concerned. This is also a prerequisite for Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

In the end, we demand the immediate replacement of prefect Ionel Ungur in Bihor county. The last announcement issued by the local-county representative of the power regarding our festivities of March 15 contains open rabble-rousing anti-minority propaganda leading even to injury. If the Romanian Government takes seriously the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation, it can not support in its own representation the Bihor county president of the Romanian Party for National Unity in a high county function. The Romanian Government should not assist in

the spreading of the evil inter-ethnic conditions of Cluj to these parts. For the sake of reconciliation between nations, the inhabitants of Oradea from Romanian and Hungarian nationality living together in harmony shall raise their voice against the ultra-nationalistic prefect who endangers the peace of the city and county.

15 March 1996, Oradea

The 41st Congress of the Federative Union of European Nations

16-19 May 1996, Timisoara

Autonomy: Best solution against secession

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Friends!

Today is a day of happiness and satisfaction for the Hungarian national minority in Romania. Just three years have passed since the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Flensburg Congress accepted the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) as a full member - and already, we have been given the special honour of hosting in our country, in the historic city of Timișoara, the noted representatives of Europe's minority nationalities during the forty-first FUEN congress.

First of all I must thank President Christopher Pann, and FUEN's decision-makers for this honour, and for the practical help that the simple choice of Romania as the site for this meeting has given this country's Hungarian community and the other national minorities present in Romania. The presence of the Congress here, represents real support for our minority's struggle.

It is here too that I would like to say a few words of thanks to those colleagues and supporters who played a major role in our acceptance as a full member of FUEN, and in FUEN's acceptance of our invitation to hold this congress here in Timisoara. They are, among others: Géza Szócs, past General Secretary of the DAHR; László Pillich, our representative to FUEN; and Eva Maria Barki, the noted Barrister in Vienna. It is with regret that I learned of László Pillich's final decision to resign the post and responsibilities which he has carried for so many years at FUEN. The ban on Mrs Barki's entry or residence in this country is, on the other hand, Romania's shame.

My third word of thanks, is that I am able, after such unforeseen complications and lengthy to-ing and fro-ing, to address the respected Congress in person. It is not as the Honorary President of the DAHR, but much rather as a past pastor off the Timișoara Reformed Congregation that I wish to address you.

First, I would like to cite the remaining memory of the bloody Christmas of 1989, and bring before you the lessons it offers us. Here in Timișoara, from the church of my congregation, the Hungarian Reformed people and the - mainly Romanian - supporters who joined them, began the desperate opposition which grew into the Romanian Revolution, and signalled the end of the Ceaușescu communist dictatorship. The deciding characteristic of those December days was the close solidarity and united action of the Romanian people and the other nationalities against common and nationalist oppression. Multi-ethnic and multi-denominational Timișoara gave the country and the world the example of national tolerance, and religious ecumenism.

I would much prefer on an occasion such as this to speak only about national and religious reconciliation, and about the good relations between nationalities. Especially, here in Timișoara, where since the changes of 1989, inter-ethnic and inter-denominational festivals and conferences organised by our church have taken place every year. Unfortunately, this I cannot do.

The restoration of communism in this, as in many other neighbouring countries, has obstructed democratic transformation in Romania, and I am forced to continue to talk about the deprivation of our rights as a minority. The constitutional principle of the “unitary Romanian nation-state” upon which the homogenisation of the country’s population is based, is but a continuation of the oppressively nationalist and assimilating politics that have been practised in Romania for the last three-quarters of a century. This pan-Romanian great national political process has resulted in the size of the Hungarian community falling from 32% of Transylvania’s population to 21% (or from 1,663,000 to 1,603,000 people) and the German national group melting away from 800,000 to just 100,000, while the number of Romanian inhabitants has increased through organised assimilation and migration from 2,829,000 to 5,671,000 people over the same period. That is, the percentage size of the ethnic Romanian population in Transylvania has jumped from 54% of the population to 74%. While in 1920, over 30% of the country’s population belonged to the national minority communities, this proportion has now fallen below 10%. The continuation of this nationalist policy of deminoritisation can be felt to this day.

Respected Congress! In no way do I wish to spoil the festive atmosphere of our gathering. However, I cannot hide or falsify the upsetting facts of our minority’s plight.

It is a great honour for us that Theodor Melescanu, the Foreign Minister of Romania, has promised to greet us in person. His presence, however, could not have allowed us to forget the regretful circumstances in which the authorities, through the massive participation of the Council for National Minorities and the Ministry of Culture, have from the very start attempted to take control of our Congress. Romania’s leaders would like to use also this occasion to make the outside world believe that they are “democratically” and “impartially” trying to resolve the nationalities question, and that their only obstacle to this is the power of the so called “extreme” nationalist forces, and that as a result, the dissatisfaction of the minorities is entirely groundless.

We are sure that the FUEN Congress, and the worthy delegates will not be misled by the different types of manipulation experienced in Timisoara and Romania. We very much hope that you will not be drawn into making the same mistakes that many in the West make concerning us, now, as they did in Ceauşescu’s time.

The Hungarian national community in Romania has never at any time in its 75 years as a minority resorted to violence. It continues its struggle within the framework offered by parliamentary democracy, with peaceful and legal means, to obtain human and collective rights consistent with European standards and practice, and to see created in Romania, forms of autonomy that have worked well in other places in Europe.

Professor Christopher Pann, in his speech last year in Washington, was correct when he stated that “Autonomy is the best protection against secession”. We would like to ask the democratic forces in Romania, and not least the FUEN, to reject the baseless accusations of separatism or worse secessionism made against us by Romanian nationalists, and to support our Hungarian national community’s endeavours towards autonomy. We are convinced that only autonomy for the minorities can guarantee our rights and our survival. This autonomy is also the best guarantee for our region’s peace, security and stability.

May God bless the work of this Congress.

16 May 1996, Timișoara

Varadinum festivities
Romanian-Hungarian ecumenical festivity

5-12 May 1996, Oradea

Let Us Destroy the Wall of Lies

***Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Your Excellencies,***

I consider this a unique event, that in this afternoon, in the framework of the Varadinum festivities, we could assemble for an ecumenical meeting in the Olaszi Reformed Church, which unites the leadership of all important Churches of our country. This common sermon, in the spirit of the yearly Varadinum programs, searches for national and religious advance, as well as being also an exemplary continuation of the traditional and progressive Transylvanian ethnical, religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In the proper sense of the Gospel, we fulfill the charge of our Master, Jesus Christ, who teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount: "If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24). It is worthy that we, the Churches in Romania, the children of God who live together in these places and who praise and serve the Lord in unison, come together in brotherly peace and in the sincere fellowship of love and understanding before we appear in front of Him.

On this day we mark the extraordinary event of our Reformed Church District of "Királyhágó-mellék" in collaboration with our brother Churches in Oradea, meet on the banks of the Crisul Repede River to greet the representatives of the Churches in Banat. This event highlights and confirms the spirit of our Transylvanian tradition and the Gospel message. The present Church leaders of Timisoara embody the exemplary ecumenical attitude that is characteristic of their town and region. These leaders confirm the active inter-ethnic joining of forces and this power of fellowship led to the fall of the communist dictatorship in December of 1989.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says: "...you were at that time separate from Christ, strangers to the community of Israel, outside God's covenants and the promise that goes with them. Your world was a world without hope and without God." Remembering the miraculous changes of 1989, we also express our thankfulness using the Apostle Paul's words: "But now in union with Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood. For he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stand like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace." (Ephesians 2:12-15). In a larger theological sense, this Gospel transformation is relevant for all of us, Jews, Germans, Serbs, Romanians and Hungarians.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the year of our Lord 1989, the "wall of lies", together with the Berlin Wall collapsed once and for all. In the sense of the word, the "dividing wall" also collapsed. This is why we can come together today in the conciliatory fellowship of our Lord.

Nevertheless, we all can feel the impenetrable walls that separate us, causing us to clash and dredging up the remains of the regime of six years ago. Romanian society is divided and the Churches are no exception to this. National differences hinder our advances. Yet, God can help transform us into “new people” with a new society.

I would like to point to an obstacle which hinders both our further advance and the fundamental transformation of our society and Churches.

We have to demolish, with joined forces the “wall of lies”! This wall is the heritage of our past. It is not enough to put an end to silence. He who speaks, has to tell the truth.

“Plain ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ is all you need to say; anything beyond that comes from the devil.”, says our Lord, Jesus Christ (Mt. 5: 37). He also says: “Begone, Satan!”. That is to say, we have to expel what “comes from the devil”, Our society needs a moral renewal. This renewal excludes lies cultivated on a societal level to intentionally deceive public opinion by those who want to “divert” or steal the revolution from the people of Romania. These people’s main political methods are false propaganda, subversiveness and underhanded practices.

I consider, that in our present grave situation of transition, one of the most important duties of our Churches is to support truth, in accordance to their calling, and without thoughts of self-interest. Their words should be: yes, yes and no, no. They shall be true to Jesus’ words about truth in their services manifestations and statements.

It is no small accomplishment, that the Christian ways of telling the truth, brotherly sincerity and fellowship, firmly were carried out by this assembly.

May God bless our assembly!

9 May 1996, Oradea

The Third World Congress of the Hungarian Reformed Church¹⁵

10 August 1996, Sfântu Gheorghe

We want to find our home on our homeland

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Dear Guests,*

Since 1989, it is the second time that I have the pleasure and honor to greet in the small stadium of Sfântu Gheorghe, under God's blue sky, the people of Hâromszék my Reformed brothers and sisters who live in these places. The extraordinary fact that this time, on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the Transylvanian programs of the 3rd World Congress of the Hungarian Reformed Church, we have the opportunity to welcome in our festal fellowship our blood brothers and sisters as well as our brothers and sisters in faith from over forty countries around the world, adds to my pleasure.

This congress began one week ago in the capital of the Church District of Királyhágómellék, Oradea. First of all, I would like to deliver the greetings of our Church District to the Church District of Transylvania, to the believers of the Szeklerland and to all those present at this meeting. I do this, not only in my role as a Church Leader but also as a descendent of Hâromszék. This is why I feel at home amongst you.

The Word of my sermon in this stadium six years earlier was taken from the Epistle to the Galatians: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

This Word was delivered shortly after the sweeping changes of 1989. On one hand we were overcome by fellowship and happiness due to the release, of biblical proportions at Christmas time, from the dictatorship. On the other hand we were worrying about the bad omens and our increasing bad experiences: such as the aggression shown towards the ethnic-Hungarian population in Targu Mures.

In those "merciful times", offered by God, we questioned as alternatives. These alternatives referred both to our ethnic-Hungarian community and also the entire Romanian society. These questions were: "Shall we be prisoners or free?". Shall we use the opportunities of the offered freedom or, forced by our old-new masters, shall we bend again under the "yoke of bondage"?

Our answer we proposed then, given in the spirit of traditional Christian and Szekler freedom, is also relevant today. We do not want to be slaves on the land of our forefathers. We want to be free as the entire subjugated people of Romania want to be free. We want to break free from the minorital and religious oppression. We want "to find our home on our homeland", keeping in mind our Hungarian identity and being faithful to our Churches. We want to be equal citizens, in the fellowship of confessions and nations, of a democratic Romanian society. This is what we are fighting for together with our brothers from the majority population.

¹⁵ The Reformed Church District of "Királyhágómellék" and the Reformed Church District of Transylvania were the hosts of the central programs of the 3rd World Congress of the Hungarian Reformed Church between 3-10 August 1996.

I find very true the remark of one of our leaders who stated that we are not “slaves” any more but we are not “free” yet either.

Disregarding the political and organizational troubles that our Congress has had and acknowledging with satisfaction the positive issue of our programs, on the occasion of this closing ceremony of the 3rd World Congress of Hungarian Reformed, let us thank God for the liberty that allowed the Reformed Church in Romania to organize, in spite of all, this World Congress in its homeland.

Let us thank-God because, though we are quite far from having total minority and religious rights assured by true democratic societies, since 1989, our Hungarian Reformed Church, being spread in the former communist countries, is on its way to complete liberation.

Let us give thanks to God that our programs, in Transylvania and Partium, proceeded without trouble and restrictions even though we encountered hostile tactics and propaganda techniques.

We want to thank our Christian Romanian brothers who paid no attention to the accusations raised against us and did not believe the rabble-rousing propaganda but showed their sympathy towards our Congress.

We also want to express our thanks to the Romanian Church Leaders, government as well as self-governmental executives who honored us with their presence during our programs.

We are very thankful to the bishops in our historic Hungarian brother Churches from Transylvania who supported our side with the Joint Declaration and together with their priests and ministers participated in our programs. This important festivity of the Reformed Hungarians throughout the World became the exemplary fulfilling of ecumenia.

A final thank-you is given to the security forces in the localities concerned, whose supervision remained symbolic during our disciplined and peaceful programs.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In ending, let me remind you of the Congress’ Proclamation accepted in Oradea. This Proclamation is an itemized account concerning the question: “What do the Hungarian Reformed people require?”.

During the Congress, on other scenes of our festivity, we drew up similar wishes and standpoints to the Proclamation mentioned above.

Please allow me to submit to you some of these standpoints and to propose them to you for confirmation.

1/ Please support the standpoint, unanimously voted with raised hands by the 3,000 participants of the Ecumenical Festivity from Timisoara on August 5th, according to what in the need of social justice and rightfulness the cases of the martyrs of December 1989 have to be cleared up and responsibility has to be established for their cases.

2/ Let us also support another proposal from Timisoara of a bilateral, representative Romanian-Hungarian round-table conference that aims to reconcile both nations.

3/ Thirdly, we want to take a strong position against intolerance and hostility, in the name of Christ’s love, in the spirit of traditional Transylvanian tolerance and in the spirit of ecumenia.

4/ Finally, we entirely support the unbounded Hungarian-tongue and denominational education in the counties where our people live in the minority, on its native land.

According to the summons of the Council of Europe, we urge the restoration of the religious schools, including 600 Reformed school buildings, illegally expropriated by the communists.

In finishing my speech, please allow me to invite you to participate in the penitence, which is a major condition of our internal renewal and hopes for the restoration of our Church.

According to the words of our national prayer, “Thy anger raised in your heart because of our sins”, God punishes us because of our sins. The most harmful sin for us is when “your own son attacks your bosom, beautiful homeland”.

In preparing ourselves to partake in the Lord’s Supper, let us reconcile ourselves with God and each other, to look for one future in our feeling and will.

10 August 1996, Sfantu Gheorghe