

Amsterdam Studies

The Truth, the Whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth

Amsterdam Studies is a multi-lingual Internet forum for analyses on political, economic and cultural developments in Europe.

ISSN 1873-3042

Editor-in-chief: László Marác

Internet: www.federatio.org/amsterdamstudies.html

Email: lkmaracz@orange.nl



Miklós Tóth: Great problems in the Roman Catholic Church in Romania/Transylvania

Issue #31.

28 July 2007

Press release*Great problems in the Roman Catholic Church in Romania/Transylvania*

Roman Catholics in Romania, nearly exclusively Hungarians, are deeply scandalized over the measures taken by G. Jakubinyi, the archbishop of Alba Julia/Gyulafehérvár, who dismissed the vicar of the St. Michael Cathedral in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, Árpád Czirják and that of Sumuleu/Csiksomlyó, István Gergely. The true reason of these dismissals is the very successful work of these two priests among the believers of their Church. This is their duty.

The measures of the archbishop are clearly in order to please Romanian authorities and the extremely nationalistic ethnic-Romanian majority in the country in order to undermine and to smash the morality of Hungarians in Transylvania. This is in the line of the present politics of appeasement of the Vatican concerning Romanian Orthodoxy and Eastern Orthodoxy in general. The Vatican offers for its naïve politics of wishful thinking the Hungarian Catholics. The R.C. Church betrays not only its members but also its vocation. The Pope himself, Benedict XVI, head of the Roman Catholic Church, is responsible for this politics. There is a world-wide outcry of indignation over these decisions. When the church drops its members, the members drop the church. This is neither only an internal ecclesiastic trouble, nor simply a problem of a national minority, but - taken into consideration the context of it - a wilful violation of general human moral values in Central Europe, now part of the EU. Consequently it is a problem for everybody. On this reason the undersigned, president of the Hungarian Protestant Christian Pastoral Service in the Netherlands, knowing the situation in Romania, wrote the enclosed letter, *à titre personnel*, to the Pope, which is self-explanatory. As, notwithstanding the international indignation, the decisions remained unchanged, it is inevitable to publish this letter in original English and in Hungarian translation.

The Hague, 20 July 2007

Dr. Miklós Tóth

To His Holiness
Pope Benedict XVI
Vatican City
I-00120 Rome

Registered

In the hands of His Papal Holiness.

The Hague, 1st July 2007

Papal Holiness,

Being a Protestant Christian, both Dutch and Hungarian, not a Roman Catholic one, I feel however obliged to draw the attention of Your Holiness to problems that affect the Roman Catholic community - of overwhelmingly Hungarian origin - in Transylvania, Romania. These problems can have serious consequences both for the Roman Catholic Church as well as for Hungarians in general within and outside that country.

Roman Catholics in Transylvania feel being left in the lurch and betrayed by their Church. The fact, that the predecessor of Your Holiness, Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Romania, notwithstanding many requests, failed to visit Transylvania where the largest Roman Catholic community lives in that country, will never be forgotten by anybody. Another continuous bitter experience is the lack of serious Church-support for Roman Catholic 'csángó' Hungarians in Moldavia for priests of Hungarian origin and for church activities in their mother tongue. These are only two examples of a very long series of disappointments. In Transylvania - as in other countries - religion and national identity are strongly interwoven.

Moreover the old (as from 1054) but still vivid problems between Eastern and Western Christianity hit painfully the daily life of nearly everybody in Transylvania.

The idea of a 'one nation' Romanian state as codified in the Constitution, is the basic dream of all ethnic Romanians - irrespective their church membership - in this by the peace treaties of Versailles in 1920 artificially created multinational state. A *contradictio in terminis*. After World War II Germans have been 'sold' to Germany and Jews to Israel. Hungarians are the greatest (about 1,800,000), practically the only important minority taken into account their size as well as their economic and cultural role. Ethnic Romanians consider themselves in fact as 'jailers' of Hungarians: this is a strong unifying factor for them. Hungarians are Roman Catholics or Protestants. The Romanian Orthodox Church is the leader and the vehicle of the fanatic Romanian nationalism with deep hatred against Hungarians. The Orthodox Church is very aggressive and at present on the zenith of its victorious expansive development. The patriarch of Bucharest is the 'hyper-head of state'. In Romania in fact everything depends on ecclesiastic/national problems.

Now a new drama has arisen in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg, the *de facto* capital of Transylvania, which whole Transylvania throws into commotion. The vicar of the St. Michael Cathedral, Árpád Czirják, a generally respected and beloved priest in the whole country - who in 1979 has even been proposed by archbishop Áron Márton as his successor - has to leave his parish on the 1st of August due to a decision taken by the archbishop of Alba Julia/Gyulafehérvár/ Karlsburg, György Jakubinyi, notwithstanding a great opposition within and outside the church. The decision of the archbishop is generally considered as a political one in order to please Romanian authorities.

The St. Michael Cathedral community is a very important centre of Transylvanian Roman Catholics. It is well known that it was due to Árpád Czirják that the St. Michael Church survived the plans of destruction during the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu. It was also Árpád Czirják, who was attracting children and families to the Catholic church when religion was considered to be an anti-state practice with very serious consequences. Even

under the constant threat and persecution of the Romanian secret service, the much dreaded Securitate, Árpád Czirájék carried on saving souls for the Church, and developing his local parish in a strong and flourishing way.

It is well-known, that the Vatican authorities often consult with the Romanian Orthodox Church. This might be partly also due to the weak position of the Greek Catholic Church in that country, which recognizes Your Papal Holiness as its Head. Also this church of ethnic Romanians is anti-Hungarian. It is the inventor of the false tale of the 'Daco-Roman theory', which is however the basic myth of the present Romanian state. This church has been for a great part liquidated by the Orthodox Church (in co-operation with the state) during the 20th century. This tragic evolution was already predicted by Miklós Baron Jósika in the beginning of the 19th century.

The Roman Catholic Church offers in fact Hungarian Roman Catholics for a naïve, wishful dream of a future co-operation with the self confident Romanian and Eastern Orthodoxy in general. This will continue as long as the Roman Catholic Church will make concessions. Why could be achieved now, in the present historic situation, what could not be achieved in 1439? In fact this politics of appeasement is based on a false hope. The undoubtedly not naïve but very creative Orthodox and Greek Catholic co-players are manipulating the Vatican. Co-operation is necessary, but is it the right way to start with offering an active part of the church for an uncertain hope?

Archbishop Péter Erdó of Esztergom (Hungary) has demanded the Transylvanian Roman Catholics to accept the decision of their archbishop, i.e. to betray themselves, to act against their conscience, exactly what they were compelled to do during the communist period, but now on demand of their own church, pre-eminently their moral authority (Vide: Mtth. 16:26, I.Thess. 5:20). This is the key ethic point: a human – and christian - moral drama, a crisis, caused by the Roman Catholic Church, a church of Jesus Christ, to its own believers. The Church is misusing the loyalty of its members. The foreseeable consequence of this evolution will be a moral collapse among Roman Catholics, who were until now, often at the peril of their life, loyal to their Church. We are not more living in the middle ages.

What to do, when the Church is not loyal to its believers and – this is worse – to its moral task? When the Church drops the church-members, the church members drop the church. It is Your Papal Holiness, who is responsible for this. This will result in the loss of many Hungarian Roman Catholics for the Church, very faithful Catholics during centuries. They go over either to Protestant churches or to nothing. Are these foreseeable consequences really according to the intention of Your Holiness? In any case, with this strategy the Roman Catholic Church will suffer serious damages in Transylvania, and in that case the church deserves these consequences. However: I cannot and I don't want to believe that all aspects of the problem were taken into consideration. This is the reason of this letter. As a brother in Jesus Christ I try to shield Your Papal Holiness from a mistake.

Another aspect of the planned – and meanwhile in the press published - ecclesiastic change is a risk similar to that in the USA in the last years.

Maybe it would be useful for Your Holiness to reconsider this month the situation in Transylvania.

The undersigned is among other functions the president of the Hungarian Protestant Christian Pastoral Service in the Netherlands and secretary of the Hungarian Reformed Pastoral Service in Western Europe. This letter has been written *à titre personnel*. It is a *cri de Coeur*, without expecting an answer, but reserving the right of publication, if necessary.

To Your Papal Holiness faithfully,

Dr. M.I. Tóth
