

Declaration

in terms of European Integration and Ecumenism

We, in terms of the Transylvanian Hungarian community and Church, greeted Romania's joining the **European Union** with delight rendering thanks to God. At the same time we cannot conceal our **reservations** and **criticism**, explicitly and most of all, in connection with the instances of denominational and ethnic discrimination that disadvantage our ethnic community and churches in Romania. European politicians pointed out several occasions that, as a result of integration, minorities may become defenseless in case their cause is not preliminarily settled, since there are no then adequate and essential political means for a subsequent settlement of issues. Concerning this matter, neither the traditionally nationalistic Romanian minority politics, nor the excessively lenient Hungarian 'neighborhood-politics' promise helpful results for the Hungarians in Transylvania.

Our **unfavorable condition** after the integration is reflected – besides many – in the following issues: the denial of our minority rights and the right for autonomy; ethnic and denominational discrimination in education; the maintenance of the ban concerning the independent Hungarian-speaking higher education; the disadvantageous discrimination of the Hungarian private universities; the disorder in terms of private and church property; the insufficiency of the recently passed church law which ignores our legitimate demands regarding church properties.

After the European integration, in the midst of the 'EU-phoria', generated also artificially in Romania, the situation of the **Babeş-Bolyai University** is scandalous. This implies the prohibition of the autonomous Hungarian departments and bilingual inscriptions. In Oradea/Nagyvárad, the **Lorántffy Zsuzsanna Reformed High School** is the subject for ethnic and religious discrimination concerning the confiscated sports ground of the school. It is unfortunate and damaging, that our country is 'exporting' such minority based, denominational, ethnicity conflicts and strained relations into the European Union.

The facts that this year **Sibiu/Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt** becomes the cultural capital city of Europe and this city, once centre of German-Saxon community in Transylvania, will host the **Third European Ecumenical Assembly**, in September, are in close relation with the integration of the country. Nevertheless, the ongoing disadvantageous condition of the churches, belonging also to the ethnic Romanian minority groups, such as the Greek-Catholic, the Roman-Catholic and Protestant will cast a shadow not only on Sibiu, the proclaimed capital city of Europe, but on the highly praised **Romanian Ecumenism** as well.

The Universal Ecumenical Week of Prayer, meant to enhance the unity of Christendom is organized in the period 21-28 January, this year. For this occasion, **Teoctist**, the Romanian orthodox patriarch urged in his letter for: "As the citizens of the European Union we should propagate **peace**, and live it in our **deeds** by the side of those, who believe in universal values, such as **charity**, **justice** and **righteousness**." "We voice our hope that the soul of **love**, **good will** and **tolerance** shall prevail over hatred, violence and all manifestations of intolerance." Teoctist declared these words in his circular. (Underlined by me, LT). Still, what kind of 'love', 'charity', 'righteousness' and 'tolerance' can we speak of at such a university, where Hungarian words are banned with force, or if we take into consideration the leader of the Orthodox church, the chief organizer of the Ecumenical Assembly at Sibiu, who deprived the minority church and its youth from their sole sport field by collaborating with the power of majority.

In our country there are regular instances for **nationalistic speeches propagating hatred**. The press conference organized by the Great Romania Party and the anti-religious propaganda created by the local media, susceptible to indulging in personalities, are two illustrious instances that both happened here, at Oradea, just a few days ago. Also in this matter we can confirm that: "Injustice set people apart, whereas justice unites them."

It is our conviction that the idea of **being part of Europe** and **ecumenism** will become a reality in our country and region on the condition that democratic constitutionality and social justice prevail over the disenfranchising nationalism of the majority and its religious supremacy hidden into amiable commonplaces. This is the exclusive way for our nations and churches to get close to each other – in the communion of Christ's love.

10 January 2007

Bishop László Tőkés

Bishop Tőkés to run for an EP seat

The representatives of Transylvanian Hungarian political and civil societies outside the Democratic Alliance requested from László Tőkés, President of Hungarian National Council of Transylvania at their meeting in Cluj/Kolozsvár, on 26 January 2007 to run, as an independent candidate, for the representation in the European Parliament at the election held in May 2007.

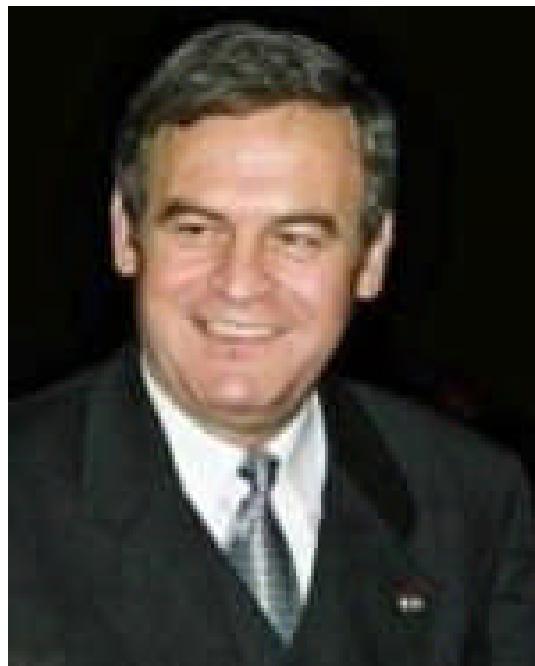
“Our fundamental objectives are the same. However, this does not imply that we will agree upon every single issue”, declared Béla Markó, President of Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania standing next to Bishop László Tőkés, President of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania after the members of the two political formations were in a one and a half hour conference held in the Democratic Alliance’s headquarters in Cluj/Kolozsvár county, in November 2006. Tőkés stated that: “We are supposed to always find solutions for making headways. Instead of concluding a constrictive unity, we must strive for arriving at a mutual agreement for the sake of common good serving the Hungarian community in Romania”. The Cluj/Kolozsvár meeting closed with a positive outcome: the participants agreed that a joint committee of experts will, in weeks, yet not later than January, come up with a “minimum program” outlining and establishing those fundamental objectives, which had previously been unanimously accepted.

In early December 2006 another Markó-Tőkés meeting was held, where a working group designed the blueprint of a Transylvanian Hungarian round table discussion. This was intended to be such a forum, where the National Council and other important civil societies “would contemplate together with the Democratic Alliance”, as the Alliance put it.

“Although we are able just to tackle the most significant issues, if the dialogue is maintained we may succeed in achieving concentration of forces concerning the matter of autonomy, which we lacked up to this moment” – declared Bishop Tőkés. He added he wished that the Alliance embracing the case of autonomy “would not be a matter of appearance, winning votes and prosperity”.

Until early January 2007 it became clear, that the high officials of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania had assumed an “always postponing or rather rejective” attitude during the dialogue regarding national minimum programme for the Hungarian community of Transylvania and autonomy issues.

These organizations considered that the authentic and consistent representation of the Transylvanian Hungarian cultural autonomy and the regional autonomy of the Szekler-land area in the European Parliament requires personal guarantees.



Bishop László Tőkés

In their communiqué the legislative bodies of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania, the Szekler National Committee, the Hungarian Civil Alliance, the Hungarian Youth Council of Romania, the Hungarian Youth of Transylvania were disappointed because the initiatives of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania related to the establishment of the round table discussion and the elaboration of a national minimum that can be represented jointly seemed to hit rock bottom.

They acknowledged with distress that the decision concerning the ranking of the candidates for the representation in the European Parliament brought by the Democratic Alliance’s Operative Body made the Hungarian National Council’s proposition impossible. This proposition was about designing a list containing joint candidates for the European Parliament, supported by the Transylvanian Hungarian political elite and civil sphere as well. Therefore, they requested László Tőkés, President of Hungarian National Council of Transylvania at their meeting in Cluj/Kolozsvár, on 26 January 2007 to run, as an independent candidate, for the representation in the European Parliament.

Pro Europe League's Religious Survey: Intolerance Is Educated

According to the survey prepared in the last third of the previous year by the Pro Europe League (PEL), residing in Târgu Mureș/Marosvásárhely, there are several instances for religious intolerance in Romania. The members of the organization distributed questionnaires among more than 3,000 subjects, mostly minors, in the nine regions of the country, including a city and a village in each region.

The main instances of the PEL's interest concerned religious education in schools, methods and text books applied in enlightening children. The survey aimed to explore which denominations are at an advantage, as well as, which are the excluded ones or those judged in an unfavorable way.

The results are shocking: most of the subjects identified the orthodox religion to be the most important one. The organizers, virtually on every location, were confronted with crucifixes, religious icons, or even smaller chapels, at the sole service of the Orthodox Church.

In these institutions there is not even the slightest reference for other religious denominations and churches, such as the Greek Catholic, the Roman Catholic, or the Protestant ones. The spot-tests during the processing of the answers undoubtedly point out that the significant part of 7-12 graders and, as well as, their teachers hold the members belonging to other religious denominations from Romania in contempt.

Students, on voluntary basis, were supposed to fill in an opinion poll containing 18 questions. These questions varied from regular ones, such as: "Do you pray at the religion class?" or "Do you have a course book for religious education?" to more complex ones, for instance: "In your opinion are there improper religions and why?", or: "If you were provided the chance to ban a denomination in Romania, which one would you opt for?"

Smaranda Enache made the following comments upon the spot-checks "We were astounded at learning about both the students' and teachers' opinions, their aggression relating to language and the lack of tolerance. A lot of people made appalling declarations about the minorities living in Romania and their denominations. Partial results give reason for major anxiety and worry even more, since they reflect peoples' attitude and are characteristic for as much to Timișoara/Temesvár, city considered to be the capital of tolerance, as for the other regions of the country."

The human rights organization became aware with astonishment that the Orthodox textbooks speak about the Orthodox Church as having been the sole historical church; meanwhile they call the Greek Catholic Church the enemy of the state, a disintegrating force pulling the nation asunder.

The establishment of a communist government in Romania after World War II proved disastrous for the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. On 1 October 1948, 36 Greek Catholic priests met under government pressure at Cluj/Kolozsvár. They voted to terminate the union with Rome and asked for reunion with the Romanian Orthodox Church. On 21 October the union was formally abolished at a ceremony at Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár. On 1 December 1948, the government passed legislation which dissolved the Greek Catholic Church and gave over its property to the Orthodox Church. The six Greek Catholic bishops were arrested on the night of December 29-30. Five of the six later died in prison.

After 41 years underground, the fortunes of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania changed dramatically after the Ceausescu regime was overthrown in December 1989. On 2 January 1990, the 1948 decree which dissolved the church was abrogated. Greek Catholics began to worship openly again, and three secretly ordained bishops emerged from hiding.

Unfortunately the reemergence of the Greek Catholic Church was accompanied by a confrontation with the Romanian Orthodox Church over the restitution of church buildings. The Catholics insisted that all property be returned as a matter of justice, while the Orthodox held that any transfer of property must take into account the present pastoral needs of both communities.

Smaranda Enache locates the reason for this high degree of intolerance in the composition of the committee in charge of editing textbooks. Adrian Lemeni, under-secretary of the Ministry of Education and Religion, is the editor and co-author of a religious course book designed for nine graders, which contains white lies of almost inflammatory and provocative character – claim the organizers of the poll.

Lemeni and his three colleagues, Nedelea Jean, Păunoiu Georgian and Silviu Tudose in their work entitled *Faith – The Orthodox Religion* (Religie – Cultul ortodox) accuse not only religious sects of proselytism, the act of forced conversion, but the Greek Catholic Church as well.

The authors, in the chapter entitled "Religious Tolerance and Proselytism" from the religious course book, published in 2006 by the Bucharest publishing house Corint, identifies the Greek Catholic Church from the beginning of the 18th century as the embodiment of proselytism. These authors, who are all professors at the Orthodox College for Theology 'Patriarhul Justinian', lay blame on the Greek Catholics who, in order to recruit new members for their denomination, employed antisocial and immoral means. Moreover, sometimes they did not draw back from forcibleness either.

Enache Smaranda inferred the conclusion: "Not the icons on school walls are causing problems, but these sorts of text books. After 60 years of cheating them out of their private property, Greek Catholics were still not compensated. In addition, they are exposed to such violent attacks." The leader of the PEL added that at a round table conference Lemeni's remarks offended even the board of school-inspectors of orthodox majority from county Cluj/Kolozsvár.

Referendum on Autonomy

The internal – unofficial – referendum on the autonomy issue, initiated by the Szekler National Council (SNC), was finalized in 25 towns in the Szekler-land (Székelyföld) region, some 99% of the respondents being in favor of the autonomy, according to centralized data.

The Szekler-land is one of the largest European regions with a significant minority ethnic group. While about half of the Hungarian minority in Romania lives in smaller groups scattered over Transylvania, the other half form a majority at regional level in Székely Land, Eastern Transylvania. After the fall of Communism, many hoped that the former Hungarian Autonomous Region, which existed between 1952 and 1968, would be restored again.

Nationalist politicians called for organizers of the ballot to be prosecuted. But Romania's Interior Ministry said that organizing an informal poll was not illegal.

Article 1 of the Romanian Constitution defines the country as a "sovereign, independent, unitary and indivisible national state." It has often been argued that, as a result of this provision, any ethnic-based autonomy, including that of Székely Land, would be unconstitutional. It is important to note, however, that the Constitution does not explicitly define "national state" in ethnic terms, neither does it contain provisions against the devolution of power.



Traditional Szekler-land and its modern administrative division to change ethnic proportions

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Edited by the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania; drafted by János Antal and Zsolt Szilágyi
RO-410095-Oradea, str. J. Calvin 1; fax: +40 259 432837; email: antaljanos@partium.ro
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