

Transylvanian Hungarians to be represented in the European Parliament

The supporting signatures for Bishop László Tőkés, President of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania to run as an independent candidate for the European Parliament elections in Romania were submitted to the Bucharest national electoral bureau in March 2007. There were more than 137,000 signatures on the lists, collected throughout Transylvania.



Bishop László Tőkés, president of the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania was an outspoken critic of atheist communism, which actually led to the revolution that overthrew inhuman dictatorship in Romania, in 1989. Since then he has been appreciated by the Transylvanian Hungarian community as consequent campaigner for democratic changes and just demands for self-government.

In autumn 2006, a round-table discussion initiated by the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania, aimed at drafting a joint strategy with the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania to serve the best interests of the Transylvanian Hungarian community. Although it seemed the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian in Romania was also interested in such strategy, at the threshold of the campaigns for the European Parliament elections, Béla Markó, President of the Alliance announced that he does not see real prospect for coming up with a joint list of candidates. Hence, the Alliance established a list made exclusively up of own candidates. Due to Markó's announcement, discussions came to a standstill. Civil organisations and Transylvanian churches requested in public the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania to make up a joint EP candidate list and continue cooperation with the Hungarian National Council of Transylvania as initially planned.

However, President Markó determinedly defended their stand-point i.e. not only that, under no circumstances would there be a joint list with Bishop Tőkés, but Markó will not accept the bishop-politician even on his party list.

László Tőkés, despite the Alliance's exclusion from their list, still accepted the challenge so that the vital claims of the Transylvanian Hungarian community shall have representation in the European Parliament. Bishop Tőkés is supported by six civil organizations and Transylvanian historical churches.



Working on joint strategy:
Béla Markó (right) then suddenly changed his views

"I would like to make it clear that I am ready to represent the entire Transylvanian Hungarian community in the European Parliament, not party interests. This is the point where my candidacy differs from others'. Of course, I will represent Romania's interests as well, since the Transylvanian Hungarian community is part of it."

"In other words, I will fight for the well outlined national interests and the Transylvanian Hungarian national ones as well. I hope these two will be at odds as seldom as possible in the Union" stated László Tőkés. In the same time, he drew attention to the fact that the label of independent candidate might be misleading, for a church leader can not be 'independent' but should not be subordinate to any political party.

In the Spirit of Timișoara/Temesvár

On 26 April 2007 the multiculturalism of the Banat/Bánság region in Romania (south east part of the country) and the ecumenical spirituality of Timișoara/Temesvár were celebrated at two symbolic locations of the city in the framework of the church conference, which served as preparations for the Third European Ecumenical Assembly. These two locations were the following: the National Memorial House for the 1989 Revolution, as well as the Reformed Church, which served as the cradle of the anti-communist revolutionary movement, i.e. the dwelling place of pastor László Tőkés in those times.

The meeting of denominations was initiated by the Reformed Church in Romania, Királyhágómellék District. “The selection of the location carried a special message, namely that participants evaluate with openness those 17 years which passed since the Revolution and be able to face the communist-atheist past” – stated Bishop László Tőkés at the meeting. “Our being together was characterized by the words of Orthodox Archbishop Corneanu a similar ecumenical conference of 1992: *we did not come here for being next to one other, but to be together*”.



Here it is that the revolution started on 15 December 1989 and broke the communist rule in Romania – says the memory plaque on the wall of the Reformed Church of Timișoara/Temesvár.

As a result of the consultation, the church leaders issued a Statement with recommendations regarding the Third European Ecumenical Assembly. In an official letter addressed to the authorities they also demanded that the National Memorial House for the 1989 Revolution to remain the hosting place for the outstanding collection of documents and pictures. The leaders of the churches requested in a memorandum that the competent authorities should declare László Tőkés and his family heroes of the 1989 revolution. Archbishop Corneanu summed up the essence of their demand: “We were shocked to learn that Bishop Tőkés has not yet received this title *ex officio* in harmony with the relevant law of the early 90s. We are many thousands of official revolutionaries in the country, but who is a true revolutionary in Romania, if not László Tőkés?”

The ecumenical meeting concluded with an ecumenical worship in the Reformed Church.

Statement

The participants of today’s ecumenical round-table discussion held at Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeschwar, in the spirit of the 1989 ecumenical union, express their gratitude to God for having given strength through belief for those who opposed the despotism of the atheist communism in such an age, when resistance was considered hopeless.



Reformed Bishop László Tőkés, Orthodox Archbishop Nicolae Corneanu and Roman Catholic Bishop Martin Ross at the consultation (from left to right)

In the activity of the Timișoara and Banat (south-western Romania) churches there has been an exemplary struggle for religious and national reconciliation since Christmas 1989. Nevertheless, we were astounded when seeing how seemingly effortlessly the members of our denominations can be set against one another due to the influence of artificially generated hatred, the brand of collective sinfulness and exclusiveness. It is acknowledged that in the past several church leaders compromised themselves, when they chose opportunism and adapted to the atheist political regime. Moreover, with the help of false ecumenical propaganda, they obtained the tacit support of the international ecumenical movement as well.



Religious leaders visiting the photo exposition on communism in the basement of the National Memorial House for the 1989 Revolution.

On national level, even after the 1989 Revolution, no groundbreaking changes took place in this matter, since the Romanian churches essentially and publicly did not discontinue with the practice of the past sins and deceptions. In reality, they did not condemn their own past deeds and the overthrown dictatorship, moreover, in several respects, they maintained their activity as if nothing had happened and the whole lot worked in its most perfect course. Genuine ecumenism, however, can not be carried on solely with pious phraseology; likewise it was practiced throughout the communist regime. Then, as well, we propagated peace and love and assured the rest of the world about the “complete religious liberty”. What would guarantee the legitimacy of our further promises, words and creed in the case we adhere to the old fashioned practice? There would be but eyewash and deception. The ecumenical initiative would be winded in empty verbalism.



Bishop Tőkés in front of bold lies of communist propaganda

In the service of the salvation of our country, as well as the ideas and noble objectives set by the 1989 Revolution, the participants of today’s ecumenical round-table discussion declare that the cause of our churches’ and country’s renewal requires collaboration and an amenable dialogue with Romanian congregations. Achieving these objectives, however, implies the search for truth and the firm belief in calling evils by their name.

Thus, we declare and decide the following:

1. We trudge behind the lay world in the respect of condemning the atheist-communist regimes. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly, the religious and international ecumenical institutions are supposed to condemn **communism** in an exemplary way, just as they did **fascism**.
2. We propose the establishment of an **international ecumenical working group** and a **national ecumenical working committee**, which are responsible of investigating the effects of communism exerted upon churches.
3. It is highly recommended to treat the cause and grievances of **ethnic and religious minorities of Romania**. We hereby initiate the settlement of the ethnic question by dialogue as well as the ceasing of all types of discrimination and abuse against religious and ethnic minorities.

4. It is of utmost importance to legally investigate not only the communist past in Romania but the recent **post-communist events** as well. For example those ones that took place at Târgu Mureş in 1990, the blood-spattered events in Bucharest at the University Square and the ‘marching of the miners’. All these reflect the unblessed legacy of communism.
5. We propose that the Organizers and Participants of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly held at Sibiu should put forward the setting of the **international memorial day for the victims of communism** based on general agreement and legitimized by the European Parliament.
6. We express our appreciation towards the Community of European Protestant Churches and the Conference of European Churches for their supporting aid which decisively contributed to the organization of the interfaith programme entitled **Healing of Memories** (Romania). We are firm in the belief that the inter-confessional and inter-cultural series of dialogues, which started two years ago, determinedly contributed to a more solid collaboration among our Romanian churches.
7. We support the endeavours represented by the board of directors of the **1989 Revolution Memorial House** aimed at keeping the present day headquarter residence at Timișoara.

26 April 2007
Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeschwar

Romanian Orthodox Archbishopric at Timișoara
Dr. *Nicolae Corneanu*, archbishop

Reformed Church in Romania, Királyhágómellék
District
Bishop *László Tőkés*

Roman Catholic Bishopric at Timișoara
Bishop *Martin Roos*

Greek Catholic Bishopric, Lugoj
Bishop *Alexandru Messian*

Jewish Community at Timișoara
President Dr. *Paul Costin*

Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Lugoj
Dean *Ilie Albiciuc*

Lutheran Church at Timișoara
Minister *Zsombor Kovács*

Alliance of Baptist Congregations of the Banat Region
Preacher *Victor Tuț*

Inexplicable role

The voters of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania have had a dilemma for quite a long period. Did they authorise the Alliance, as the only possible option, to safeguard the interests of the Hungarian community of Romania in the Romanian Parliament? Or shall the Alliance govern Romania by all means? Even if abandoning the most vital claims for the survival of the community?

The Alliance is otherwise close to set the record of the longest presence in the Romanian government since the fall of communist dictatorship. Briefly, since 1996 to present, the Alliance took advantage of all governing opportunities regardless of character of the majority political forces. This kind of opportunism and that the Alliance abandoned vital demands for the ethnic Hungarian community in Romania as a governing factor, brought much confusion and disappointment for many of their voters.

Furthermore, Premier Călin Popescu Tăriceanu said on 1 April that, following the recent political crisis in Romania, the future ruling coalition will be exclusively made of Liberals (PNL) and representatives of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ).

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania currently holds a position of vice-premier filled in by President Béla Markó, and three ministry-positions (Ministry of Regional Development, Public Works and Housing; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Communications and IT).

In an exclusive coalition with the liberals, it is feared that the Alliance, which is actually supposed to first of all safeguard the interests of Hungarians of Romania, will now be accused of national government failures.

Romanian non-governmental organization Pro Europa League claimed already on 5 April during a press conference, the "Hungarian stance" regarding the new government of Romania.

"It is unfortunate that taking as pretence the participation of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania in the ruling coalition, some political leaders supported by the media exploit the anti-Hungarian opinions in the Romanian society, undermining the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation process, which played a decisive part in Romania's accession to the European Union," co-president of Pro Europa League, Smaranda Enache said.

Previous Transylvanian Monitor issues are available at:

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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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