

## **GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR HUNGARIAN MINORITIES ABROAD. THE SITUATION OF THE HUNGARIAN CHURCHES ABROAD**

The peace treaties which followed the end of the two world wars modified to a differing extent the organizational structure of the Hungarian historical churches in the successor states.

With regard to the Roman Catholic Church, no independent Hungarian church hierarchy was preserved, except in Transylvania and Vojvodina, but even there it cannot be considered totally independent.

1. In Transylvania, the Roman Catholic Church functioned in the midst of severe administrative restrictions during the period of the communist party state up to the 1989 changes in Romania. The largest bishopric was that of Alba Julia [sic!] (Hungarian name: Gyulafehérvár), which comprised practically the entire territory of historic Transylvania, and which was headed for several decades by the legendary figure of national and church resistance, bishop Áron Márton.

Today Romania's Roman Catholics belong to four Transylvanian bishoprics (Alba Julia, Oradea /Nagyvárad/, Satu Mare /Szatmárnémeti/ and Timisoara /Temesvár/), and one Moldavian (Iasi /Jászvásár/), and to the Archbishopric of Budapest. More than half of the Hungarian Roman Catholics (669,483 according to the 1992 census, or 41.2% of the Hungarians living in Romania) belong to the church diocese of Alba Julia, which thus is the main center of Hungarian Catholic life. In August 1991, Pope John Paul II elevated the bishopric to the rank of archbishopric. The other church dioceses belong to the Archbishopric of Bucharest.

The spiritual and hierarchical radiation of Alba Julia toward the bishoprics of Oradea, Satu Mare, and Timisoara prevails in practice, but in spite of the many requests by the three affected bishops, the problem remains unsolved to this day from the viewpoint of church law. The adjustment (readjustment) of the status of these three bishoprics with a majority of Hungarian Catholics, namely their coming under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Alba Julia, stands today at the center of the efforts of Transylvania's Hungarian faithful and clergy. The readjustment of the present situation would also solve the problem of the realistic proportional representation of ethnic ratios within Romania's conference of Roman Catholic bishops, as the Hungarian Catholics, although they constitute a majority in their church, are under Romanian direction at the national level.

Pastoral work in the Hungarian language among Moldavia's Csángos continues to remain unresolved. The largest part of Moldavia's Csángos have become romanized linguistically and in their consciousness. Besides this irreversible process, there are still in Moldavia 40,000 to 60,000 Csángo Hungarian Catholics who still speak Hungarian (even though they speak Romanian better as their everyday language). The Romanian Catholic church shows no tolerance toward their practicing their religion in the Hungarian tongue, and the sporadic attempts by Hungarian clergymen are termed illegal from the viewpoint of canon law. At the same time, the Romanian Catholic church consisting mostly of romanized Csángos is also spreading in the Hungarian church dioceses.

Hungarian Roman Catholics number 669,483 according to the data of the 1992 Romanian census. Most of Romania's Hungarian Catholics live in the dioceses of Satu Mare,

Oradea, and Alba Julia. Traditionally, a bishop of German origin heads the diocese of Timisoara, where the faithful are of mixed nationality, mostly Germans besides the Hungarians.

According to the verbal report of bishop Pál Reizer, only a small number of mostly magyarized Catholics of German origin still live today in the Satu Mare diocese. Romania's Hungarian Catholics have their independent, Hungarian-language seminaries and a few middle-level educational institutions. The further growth of the Catholic spiritual sphere is greatly hindered by the fact that the restitution of church buildings turned earlier into state property has not taken place in practice.

The activities of monastic orders in Romania do not meet any legal obstacle at present. So far, the presence of the Franciscan order which carries out pastoral, charitable, and in part educational tasks, can be considered as significant.

Compared to the population of the mother country, the number of priestly and monastic offices is greater in Transylvania. Especially many priests come from among Moldavia's Csángos but they often become against their will the instruments of romanization.

The Reformed (Calvinist), the Evangelical (Lay Synod Evangelical-Lutheran Church of the Augustan Confession), and the Unitarian churches have functioned without any limitation in historic Transylvania since the 1568 National Assembly of Torda ("Torda Union"). Those belonging to the Reformed (Calvinist), Lutheran, and Unitarian churches are, with a few exceptions, of Hungarian nationality. The still remaining fragmentary ethnic Germans (Saxons) of Transylvania form a Lutheran church separate from the Hungarian one.

The Reformed (Calvinist) church is divided into two basic structural units, the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District, with its seat in Oradea, and the Transylvanian Reformed Church District, with its seat in Cluj (Kolozsvár). Both are headed by bishops. Both church districts have pastor-training schools, and the Királyhágó district has an institute of higher education (Hungarian University of the Partium) which trains lay experts, as well as secondary schools. According to the latest census, the Protestants number 765,355.

The Unitarian Church, entirely of Hungarian nationality, maintains one bishopric in Cluj and counts 74,748 members.

The seat of the Hungarian Evangelical (Lutheran) Church is also in Cluj, and the Hungarian Lutheran faithful number 19,500.

The faithful in the Jewish communities of Transylvania and the Partium (a border region formerly part of the Kingdom of Hungary) were reduced to a minimal number during the Second World War as a result of the well-known tragic events and the state-induced emigration at the end of the 1950s. We have knowledge of Jewish communities in Timisoara, in the Partium, and in northern Transylvania. They have no independent training for rabbis and no denominational schools.

There is at present no denominational law in Romania. The draft law worked out by the government fell short of every expectation. It would like to declare the Orthodox church as the national church, and its articles are ambiguous (so-called "rubber paragraphs") and refer to other, non-existing laws.

The question of church property remains unresolved to this day. Following the 1996 elections, the authorities de facto handed back a few buildings (one or two buildings in Transylvania's largest cities) to their former owners. The two emergency government decrees passed since then (on 25 June 1998 and 6 May 1999, respectively) stipulated the restitution of a total of 23 Hungarian properties (the actual number was in reality smaller because, for example, the residences of the Catholic and Reformed bishops in Oradea were included in both decrees. The implementation of the decrees is also meeting with legal obstacles because their provisions can be enforced in the case of each property only through complicated trial procedures. 468 Roman Catholic, 531 Reformed, 266 Evangelical-Lutheran and 35 Unitarian schools with Hungarian-language instruction still remain state property.

The sociological survey carried out in spring 1998 by the co-workers of the Jenő Kerkai Institute of Church Sociology in Budapest among the adult population (18-year old and older) of Transylvania, with a sample of 949 persons, shows that the social criteria of national and religious identity "considerably overlap and as a result mutually reinforce each other."

2. In Slovakia, the churches of the Hungarians living there became after 1918 minority churches without any preliminaries and not as a result of their own decision and choice. Their structures, which had developed for centuries, fell apart and they had to find opportunities for adjustment within an unknown power authority. Until now, they had to spend about one-half of their existence as a minority in an anti-religious ideological and political environment.

In Slovakia the first survey of data relating to religious affiliation occurred in 1991. 9.8% of the total population said it did not belong to any religious denomination. 17.4% of the total population and 12.9% of the ethnic Hungarians did not answer the question. According to the survey, 72.9% of the total population and 80.5% of the ethnic Hungarians belonged to a religious denomination. The statistically important difference shows that during decades of double oppression, the Hungarians maintained stronger ties to their churches, probably because of the role played by the churches in the preservation of Hungarian consciousness.

64.2% of the total population and 64.9% (368,000 persons) of the ethnic Hungarians are Roman and Greek Catholics. 1.2% of the ethnic Hungarians belong to the Greek Catholic Church. There is no independent Hungarian seminary and aspirants, next to the religious institutes of higher education where Slovak is the language of instruction, can receive religious training in various educational institutes in Hungary.

Slovakia's Hungarian Catholics do not have an independent Hungarian church hierarchy, and Hungarian Catholic religious life takes place in four Slovak church dioceses. The Bratislava-Trnava (Pozsony-Nagyszombat) church diocese has 440 independent parishes to which belong 456 affiliated localities. Of the 440 parishes, 123 are Hungarian ones but only 81 are filled. Four Hungarian clergymen are active in some 12 localities in the church diocese of Nitra (Nyitra). In the church diocese of Rožnava (Rozsnyó), 15 Hungarian clergymen are active in at least two localities each, and the situation is the same for the 17 Hungarian priests in the church diocese of Kosice (Kassa). A total of 117 Hungarian clergymen serve in at least 200 localities.

About two-thirds of the Catholic faithful in the archbishopric of Trnava are ethnic Hungarians. Close to one half in the bishopric of Rožnava and less than that in the archbishopric of Košice are of Hungarian nationality. Pastoral work in their mother tongue is ensured only in the localities which have an ethnic Hungarian priest.

Since the change of political regime, Hungarian Catholic life in Slovakia has gained numerous institutions. It has become possible to reorganize the elementary and secondary schools run by the religious orders (Benedictines, Premonstratensians, Franciscans, etc.) and by the Church. At present, a few Catholic elementary schools and two high schools are functioning. Slovakia's Hungarian Catholics have since 1991 a weekly, "Remény" (Hope) and an annual calendar titled "Katolikus Magyar Vasárnap" (Catholic Hungarian Sunday). The Pax Romana Association, which groups Hungarian Catholic intellectuals, was formed in 1993. The clergymen's "Gloria Society" has taken upon itself publishing activities, and the "Good Shepherd Foundation" the tasks of pastoral training. A Hungarian Religious Instruction Center has been set up in Tomášov (Fél) near Bratislava, and the Christian Youth Communities movement has been organized in the field of youth activities.

An old aspiration of Slovakia's Hungarian Catholics is the creation of a Hungarian bishopric, a request to which both the Slovak bench of bishops and the Holy See in Rome have so far turned a deaf ear. The Slovak bench of bishops would like to entrust the task to a Hungarian-speaking but not ethnic Hungarian bishop. The Hungarian bishop dealing with Hungarian matters should have the authority, as a regular member of the Bench of Slovak Bishops, to make decisions regarding the Hungarians' church affairs. As early as 1990, Slovakia's Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDM) asked in a letter to Pope John Paul II the appointment of a Hungarian bishop, and in support of this request, Slovakia's Hungarian Catholics hold annually on Good Shepherd Sunday a day of prayers for priestly vocations and for a Hungarian bishop. Several tens of thousands of faithful regularly attend these days of prayers held in Komárno (Révkomárom).

An acute problem of Slovakia's Hungarian Catholics is the lack of replacement for clergymen, which is not likely to be alleviated in the near future. More than one-half of the priests who minister to several parishes are over 60 years old, and the number of newly consecrated priests is only a small fraction of those who pass away. In the past decades, only 2 or 3 Hungarians were among the novices admitted annually to the seminary in Bratislava, and the situation has remained essentially unchanged to this day. At present, priests are trained in five seminaries on the territory of the Slovak Catholic church province, and among the some 500 seminarists studying in them, the number of Hungarians hardly reaches 30. Should this trend continue, it is estimated that the number of Hungarian priests could drop by one-half within ten years.

Following the change of political system, the legal and political obstacles to the reorganization of the Catholic school system have theoretically disappeared, and this process has in fact begun in spite of the still existing practical hindrances.

According to the 1991 survey, the total number of Slovakia's Calvinists then was 82,500, of whom 64,500 or 78.1% were Hungarian. The Slovak Reformed /Calvinist/ Christian Church divided into nine church dioceses (Bratislava, Komárno, Tekov /Bars/, Gemer /Gömör/, West Košice, East Košice, Uh /Ung/, Michalovce, Ondavskohornádska), is traditionally headed by a bishop of Hungarian nationality. Two of the nine church dioceses, in eastern Slovakia, are Slovak-language congregations. Together with the scattered ones, there are 380 congregations, 176 of which have lodgings for a pastor. Thus in theory, the

services of an additional 180 pastors would be needed. The administrative center of the church is in Komarno, where the Synod Presidium functions, and the bishop's seat is in Rimavska Sobota (Rimaszombat).

Making use of the changed, i.e. changing political and legal system of stipulations, the Reformed (Calvinist) Church is rapidly expanding its institutional system and pursues a resolute developmental program of education in the mother tongue. 56 day-time faculty and 29 corresponding students are registered at its institute of higher education for clergymen, the John Calvin Theological Academy, opened in 1994 in Komarno. The Slovak Ministry of Culture did recognize the institution but does not give the slightest support to its upkeep. Until now, the training of Hungarian reformed ministers could take place only in Hungary or elsewhere abroad. Two catechetical seminaries function in Kosice and Komarno, whose students receive training as religious instructors that is also recognized by the state. A youth center functions in Cecejovce (Csécs), a study center in Drahnov (Derengnyő), a mission center in Jelka (Jóka), and a deacon's center is being built in Chanava (Hanva). Work among young people and children is performed by the Association of Young Calvinists, the Association of Hungarian Calvinist Ministers of Slovakia groups the clergy, and a Salvation Mission specializing in the treatment of alcoholics has been set up.

A general problem of the Hungarian churches in Slovakia is the question of the ambiguous settlement of church property. In September 1993, the Slovak National Council, i.e. parliament passed a law on the restitution of church assets. The law provided only partial compensation for the Reformed Church. On the basis of the 1945 Benes decrees and with reference to the principle of collective guilt, the church so far did not get back from its confiscated assets about 120 school buildings. The Slovak authorities did not issue the necessary documents and certifications within the timeframe stipulated by the law, and thus the church could not attach them to the documents asking for restitution. Negotiations are still under way in this matter, and the church is seeking to assert its claims through court litigation. So far, the Calvinist Church has been given back 70% of its landed property.

3. It what has remained of the former Yugoslavia, i.e. in Serbia, there is a significant Roman Catholic population in Vojvodina. The truncated church hierarchy is represented by the bishoprics of Subotica (Szabadka) and of Zrenjanin (Nagybecskerek), which from a church and government viewpoint, are formally subordinated to the Roman Catholic archbishopric of Belgrade. Cooperation worth noting with the archbishopric and between the two bishoprics is minimal. Some 290,000 or 80% of the 360,000 faithful belonging to the Backa's Catholic church diocese, with seat in Subotica, are Hungarian, the others are mostly Croatian, and a very small number are German, Slovak, and Ruthenian. Of the 90,000 Catholics living in the Banat church diocese with its center in Zrenjanin, approximately 70% are Hungarian. There is also a very small number of Croatian, Bulgarian, Czech, and German faithful on the territory of the bishopric.

The shortage of priests, due to aging and emigration, is a cause for serious concern, especially in the Zrenjanin church diocese. There is no Hungarian-language theological training for priests in Vojvodina and the language of instruction at the seminary of Subotica is Croatian. Next to the Catholic secondary school in Subotica, we do not know of any other Hungarian-language educational institute functioning in Vojvodina.

In Yugoslavia church property was returned only to the Orthodox Church. The Hungarian Catholic and Protestant churches do not receive any state support.

About one-eighth of Vojvodina's faithful belong to the Reformed (Calvinist) Church. In the 13 church communities and 38 scattered flocks that belong to the Reformed Christian Church of Yugoslavia, with its seat in Feketic (Feketics), the number of the faithful has shrunk below 15,000. Bishop István Csete Szemesi and the members of the reformed congregations are of Hungarian nationality. In the case of the Reformed community, their significant missionary and charitable as well as summer youth religious life activities deserve special mention.

Other, less numerous Hungarian Protestants live on the territory of Vojvodina province. Among them, the most important is the Lutheran Church led by superintendent Árpád Dolinszki, with its seat in Bajmok.

During the period of the party state, every form of religious practice was severely restricted and the clergymen were in effect driven outside the framework of society. As a result, the national consciousness forming influence of the churches could hardly assert itself among the Catholics while being somewhat stronger among Protestants. As clergymen also could not become involved in the life of the local communities, they could only slightly influence the life of the minority communities. Since the advent of political pluralism, the activity of the two Roman Catholic bishoprics and their churches consists mainly of taking certain anti-war steps, in strengthening charitable work and, in some places, in launching enterprises. The Totovo Selo (Tóthfalu) parish, to which the Retreat House and Educational Center of the Bishopric of Subotica belong, plays an important role in the spiritual life of Vojvodina's Hungarians. The spiritual and community house of the Franciscan order of Croatia, Domus Pacis located near the village of Horgos, and the Little St. Theresa parish in Senta (Zenta) and the various activities centered around it, part of which it carries out jointly with the Lajos Thurzó Public Education Center, also have a strong radiating and community-forming influence. Both the Catholic and the Protestant churches work assiduously to preserve the scattered Hungarian communities of the Srem (Szerémség) region and of southern Banat. Both historical churches, however, suffer from a shortage of clergymen, putting an increasing burden upon the current aging clergy. This, together with the placing of non-Hungarian language priests in part of the Catholic parishes and the ethnic changes within settlements and families, equally limit the practice of one's religion in the Hungarian language and the role of the churches in preserving the communities.

Recently, attacks against Hungarian priests and religious institutions have reached alarming proportions. During the Kosovo conflict with NATO, unknown perpetrators blew up the Roman Catholic prayer house at Busenje (Káptalanfalva). During the summer, several parish houses in Vojvodina, among them that of Mol (Mohol), were broken into. On 4 October 1999, in the courtyard of the Reformed parish house of Itebej (Magyarittabé), unknown perpetrators manhandled the wife of the local pastor who serves in Zrenjanin. In the evening of 9 November 1999, in the Catholic parish of Totovo Selo, unknown persons speaking a dialect from the Krajina region beat up the local parish priest, Jenő Utasi, a retired priest from Bezdán, Ferenc Kecskés, and the female religious instructor serving the parish. During the Fall, the crosses erected in the Catholic cemetery of Novi Sad (Újvidék) on Futaki Road in memory of the Hungarian victims of the 1994-45 massacres were damaged on two occasions.

4. In Croatia, the Hungarians living in Southern Baranja (Baranya) and Eastern Slavonia were until 1990 split in a 50-50 ratio between the Catholic and the Protestant churches. The Hungarian Catholics belong to the bishopric of Djakovo, which has the only priest of Hungarian nationality and language in the person of the vicar-general. There are no other priests of Hungarian nationality in the Hungarian-inhabited villages, and there exist no Hungarian-language training for priests and other forms of church education. Thus religious worship in their mother-tongue is not ensured for the Hungarian Catholics of Croatia.

During the Yugoslav conflict, the majority of the Catholic churches in the areas which became battlegrounds suffered major damage. Their reconstruction with Hungarian government support is not justified as one cannot speak of regular Hungarian-language religious life in these localities because of the lack of priests.

The Calvinists, who numbered around 4,200 in 1991, once belonged to the Reformed bishopric of Backa, then since 1993 to the then-created Reformed Christian Church of Croatia, which, in addition to the more numerous Hungarian faithful, also attends to the spiritual needs of the Calvinists of Croatian and Czech nationality. The Hungarian minority has voiced the criticism that the bishop and the church leadership have not displayed a consistent attitude towards attempts at "croatization." Partly because of this problem, on 6 June 1999 seven communities in Baranja-Slavonia (Laslovo /Szentlászló/, Kopacevo /Kopács/, Zmajevac /Vörösmart/, Suza /Csúza/, Knezevi Vinogradi /Hercegszöllős/, Bilje /Bellye/, Osijek /Eszék/) have left the former church organization and formed the Hungarian Reformed Christian Church of Croatia (HMRKE), headed by the superintendent. This church, together with the scattered Hungarian congregations in western Slavonia and those being formed along the Adriatic sea coast, groups about 60% of the Calvinists of Croatia. It is served by three pastors as well as fifth-year theological students. Next to the setting up of a church nursery school in Vardarac (Várdaróc), preparations are also under way for the creation of a Christian Youth Association. HMRKE also publishes a newspaper titled "Reformed Life." The training of the Hungarian Reformed pastors of Croatia takes place in Budapest, in Cluj (Kolozsvár) in Romania, and Komarno (Révkomárom) in Slovakia.

The church assets of the Hungarian Catholic and Reformed communities were to a large extent destroyed during the Yugoslav conflict. An important number of their churches, parish houses, and institutions were demolished (the churches of Bilje, Lug /Laskó/, Laslovo, Korog /Kórógy/, Kopacevo, Hrastin /Haraszi/, Tordinci, Kamenac /Kő/ and Kotlina /Sepse/. During the years of Serbian occupation, three Reformed pastors attended to the religious needs of the entire Baranya, without regard to religious denomination. The Reformed Refugee Mission of Délvidék (Southern Region) and the Expellees' Community with its seat in Osijek took care of the spiritual needs of the refugees living in Hungary and in the non-occupied areas of Croatia. The Expellees' Community gathered the Reformed refugees under the leadership of the pastor of Kopacevo and present superintendent of HMRKE.

5. From the viewpoint of religious affiliation, the Hungarians living in the Mura Region (Muravidék) of Slovenia display a more homogeneous and more colorful picture compared to the Slovenian population than the other Hungarian minority communities in the Carpathian basin. After 1920, the Roman Catholics who make up 80%-85% of the Hungarian population, belonged under the jurisdiction of two local vicar generals as the diocesan bishop of Szombathely in Hungary could no longer assert his original jurisdiction.

During that period, the situation of those living alongside the newly drawn borders became particularly complicated as the border stipulations of the Trianon Treaty did not take into consideration the church organizational units (in the Hetés Region, for example, they partitioned parishes). The situation was somewhat stabilized when the area was, from a church administration viewpoint, attached to the bishopric of Maribor, to which the Hungarian Catholics still belong today, but the move was not favorable to religious worship in the Hungarian language. During the World War II years, the area came again under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Szombathely.

Even if the religious worship of the Hungarian-language Roman Catholics is ensured to this day, the shortage of priests following World War II prevents the church from playing a decisive role in the cultivation of the minority's national consciousness and mother tongue. The Mura region is served by two parish priests of Slovenian nationality who are mastering the Hungarian language and honorably carry out their pastoral work but do not consider it their task to foster Hungarian national consciousness. Church ceremonies are bilingual. As a result of secularization, the disadvantageous age composition, and the speeding up of assimilation, the number of those requesting religious instruction in the Hungarian language has dropped by one-half. As the Roman Catholic church definitely concentrates its attention on religious goals and tasks, there have been in the past decades no differences of a national character in that field.

The Hungarian Calvinists of the Mura Region, numbering about 500, form one congregation Motvar Jevci (Szécsiszentlászló), have no Hungarian pastor and are served by visiting pastors from Hungary. The small number of Hungarian Lutheran church faithful at Hodos (Őrihodos) have a Slovenian pastor.

6. In Transcarpathia (Ukraine), the churches were subjected to significant restrictions during the Soviet era, and their personal and material conditions were reduced to a minimum. The Greek Catholic church was incorporated into the Orthodox hierarchy. The reorganization of Transcarpathia's Hungarian historical churches began in 1989 still under Soviet authority in the wake of the emerging political changes. Since then, with the end of the political and legal restrictions, conspicuous changes can be seen regarding the renewal of organizational and religious life.

The reorganization of the Catholic church is taking place with the significant personnel and other support of the mother church in Hungary, such as the resettlement of the Franciscan mission. The Catholic church organization, the Roman Catholic Apostolic Province is headed by bishop Antal Majnek, who prior to the change of political regime came from Hungary to his present place of work as a Franciscan missionary priest. Next to the small number of local priests and the Franciscan mission, the rebirth of Catholic religious life in Transcarpathia goes mainly to his credit. There are 29 Catholic priests serving the region, but according to the bishop at least another 10 would be needed to fully meet the spiritual needs of the faithful. The solution of the replacement problem is promising, with 25 novices from Transcarpathia, 16 of them Hungarians, studying at present in various seminaries. Even so, meeting the pastoral needs still faces difficulties as close to 85% of Transcarpathia's Roman Catholic faithful are of Hungarian nationality.

While differing somewhat from the data characterizing the region, the Reformed (Calvinist) church is stronger with regard to the number of faithful and its renewal could begin primarily with the support of local forces. The reorganization of the Greek Catholic church continues to meet with many problems. The restitution of the property taken over by the

state is progressing very slowly in the case of all churches. Amidst a decade-long crisis and a still deteriorating economic situation, the Christian churches, next to basic pastoral work, are paying special attention to missionary (for example among the Romas), charitable, and educational activities, and to the development of the infrastructure needed for these tasks.

At the present time, charitable groups are functioning in the majority of the localities inhabited by Catholics. Next to organizing the distribution of aid shipments, the Catholic church operates seven free pharmacies with center in Vinohragyiv (Nagyszőlős), and free kitchens in Vinohradgyiv and Tyacsiv (Técső). Due to the worsening situation, however, the church cannot directly assist everyone in need and is therefore looking for new solutions, such as trying to assist its faithful in the areas of farming and business. With the assistance of the New Handshake Public Foundation and of charitable organizations, it has already been possible to provide many people with seeds and to initiate the establishment of four bakeries. These bakeries supply bread free of charge or at a very low price to the needy, and the resulting small income is used to maintain the enterprises. Considering the serious economic situation of the region, the Hungarian churches in Transcarpathia are in need of continuous assistance, which can be provided in part by sources in Hungary and in part in the Western Hungarian diaspora. Under the terms of the agreement aimed at preventing disasters and serious accidents and at eliminating their consequences, signed on 17 October 1998 in Budapest by the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Ukraine, and which came into force on 25 December 1999, aid shipments will in the future be exempt from customs duties.

Religious instruction as part of denominational education is also being reborn in Transcarpathia. The Sisters of Mercy, who earlier had maintained many schools in the localities of the region, have resumed their teaching and educational work. There have been so far only attempts in this field on the part of the Roman Catholic church, but it is determined to open in the future nurseries and schools, above all for the scattered Hungarian communities. The initial steps have already been taken with the opening in Huszt and Rhiv (Rahó) of elementary school classes with instruction in the Hungarian language. The bishop believes that the official bodies will also support the efforts of the church in that direction.

In Transcarpathia the historical churches are paying particular attention to the improvement of the situation of the Romas, which is even worse than that of the other nationalities. From the Catholic side, this began in the village of Viskovo (Visk) where the church built a community house for the Romas. Here, next to the distribution of aid packages and of pastoral work and religious instruction, Roma children are taught how to read and write, and other subjects.

Like in the case of other churches, one of the Catholics' most burning problems is the repossession of their confiscated properties. While the solution of this problem is more simple in villages and smaller settlements, it is progressing with difficulty in the towns. The worse situation is in Uzhgorod (Ungvár), where the Catholic church owned the largest number of properties. Negotiations are under way, state promises are made but only scant progress has been achieved in the past nine years. At the same time, there are encouraging signs regarding the restitution of church estates (for example in Mukacseve /Munkács/ and Szeredne /Szerednye/). The church does not want to ask the return of these estates for itself but intends to distribute them among the landless farmers.

The spiritual needs of Transcarpathia's Reformed (Calvinist) church, which counts some 100,000 faithful, are met by 30 pastors in 91 congregations. The problem of pastor replacement appears to be solved as an encouraging number of young people are presently studying in Reformed pastor-training institutes in Hungary and Transylvania. The reacquisition of property is also a serious concern of the Reformed church. In the villages, where the church already got back most of its houses of worship and pastor's lodgings, the situation appears to have been settled but the problem of the church landed estates remains unsolved.

Among Transcarpathia's historical churches, the Greek Catholic church is struggling with the greatest concerns. The Greek Catholic community, estimated to be 300,000-strong, has 270 registered religious congregations. The problem of the reacquisition of its confiscated assets, especially of the churches handed over to the Eastern Orthodox church, affect the Greek Catholic church more severely than the other churches.

After the Second World War the Greek Catholics were still proclaiming their faith in 400 churches. Following four decades of suppression, the Greek Catholic church was allowed again to function in 1989 and got back 101 churches. The Eastern Orthodox church kept 234 and the authorities decreed that 67 churches had to be used jointly by the Greek Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faithful. In practice, however, because of the rigid opposition of the Eastern Orthodox church, the Greek Catholics cannot worship in 40 churches which have been designated for common use. As a result, Greek Catholic religious services have already for a decade been performed in many settlements outdoors or in private homes. The most glaring example is the Ceholnya church in Uzhgorod which, although officially given back to the Greek Catholic church, could not be taken over by it because of the refusal of the Eastern Orthodox church.

Another contentious problem facing the Greek Catholic church is the fact that some 30% of its priests who harbor Ukrainian nationalist feelings would like to see the Munkacséve church diocese, which functions at present under the direct jurisdiction of Rome, to come under the jurisdiction of the Greek Catholic main church diocese of Galicia. According to the compromise proposal of the Holy See, the priests of Transcarpathia would nominally recognize their obligation to the church diocese of Galicia but would in practice remain under the jurisdiction of Rome. This proposal, however, was turned down by 70% of Transcarpathia's Greek Catholic clergy with the justification that were such a step be taken, they would lose a major part of the multi-nationality faithful of the Munkacséve church diocese.

The three historical churches maintain good relations with the Ukrainian state authorities. In a joint statement before Easter last year, the three bishops in a joint declaration called upon their faithful to reelect President Leonid Kuchma who was visiting Transcarpathia. More recently before Christmas 1999, Roman Catholic bishop Antal Majnek and Calvinist bishop László Horkay published a statement in the local Hungarian-language press in support of the campaign directed from Kiev asking President Kuchma to call for a referendum to amend the constitution (dissolution of the parliament, introduction of bicameral legislation, and so on). This time Greek Catholic bishop János Szemedi did not sign the statement.

7. In the Burgenland province of Austria, a Hungarian Roman Catholic parish priest is active in Unterwart (Alsóör), and visiting priests are carrying out Hungarian-language pastoral work in other localities of the province and in other settlements in Austria

inhabited by Hungarians. Protestant spiritual work is carried out in the same manner or in the framework of bilingual religious services. Until very recently, an independent Hungarian Lutheran congregation existed in Vienna, whose pastor had for year attended to the spiritual needs of the Lutheran faithful in the whole of Austria. Since the pastor's retirement, the congregation, though still functioning, has formally lost its Hungarian character.

There is no Hungarian-language training of clergymen and no independent church education in Austria. At the same time, the Pazmaneum Institute in Vienna continues to remain at the disposal of Hungary's Catholic church and performs important tasks (missionary and charitable activities, etc.) particularly in connection with the Hungarian diaspora in the West.

8. The Hungarian Catholic and Protestant church communities in Western Europe and overseas, with their significant infrastructures and financial resources, constituted one of the basic pillars of the self-identity knowledge and mother-tongue culture of the Hungarian diaspora in the West. Nowadays, however, primarily because of a critical lack of clergymen, they have lost much of their importance and strength as a preserving force. The disappearance of the church communities of the Hungarian diaspora, in part because of the unfavorable development of personal conditions and in part as a result of the church administrative measures in the countries where they have settled (especially in case of the Catholics), can be considered an accelerating process. A parallel trend is the transfer to the assets of the universal Catholic church of the property of the disappearing Hungarian church communities acquired through the generosity of their members.

There are at present some 114,000 clergy-registered Catholic faithful in 180 cities in 11 European countries, whose spiritual needs are met by 45 clergymen. According to the annual name and address registry published in 1998 by bishop Attila Miklósházy on the basis of data supplied by some 50 West European Hungarian clergymen, there are 179 Hungarian Catholic priests serving in West Europe and a total of 393 throughout the world. Each Hungarian clergyman in Western Europe looks after 1800 to 2000 faithful. Of the 45 clergymen who supplied the data, 29 listed Hungarian-language pastoral work as their main occupation and 16 as their secondary occupation. Among the latter, 16 are in the service of local churches.

According to the opinion of the clergymen serving among the Hungarian diaspora in the West, applying mainly to the North American continent but subject to generalization in many respects, in addition to the emigrants' difficulties to adjust, "the spirit of the times is not favorable to the churches and the scattered Hungarians." The gradually secularizing society "looks at the churches with a growing lack of comprehension." In addition, they mention the cosmopolitanism manifesting itself at the state level which, in contrast to the earlier reinforcing effect of multiculturalism on the preservation of ethnic groups, promotes the homogenization of multi-nationality societies. One must also take into account the changes due primarily to economic reasons and the ethnographic migrations which dispersed the compact Hungarian communities in several countries of the Western world, such as the USA and Canada, and in the best case broke them into smaller islands. Since then, the clergymen perform diaspora pastoral work in the narrowest sense of the word, a task which requires an even greater capacity to adjust than ever before, and the use of new methods (telephone, fax, e-mail, internet, etc.).

In spite of the above mentioned trends, the attempt formulated by the Catholic side to maintain the centrally located ministries and for Hungarian clergymen to continue their wide cultural work to unite the faithful and also to make sure that “no political or anti-ecumenical tendencies manifest themselves within the work of these ministries,” may be effective. All these efforts have also been confirmed on several occasions by the Protestant churches as well. It can be said that among the church organizations and communities of the Hungarian diaspora in the West, the ecumenical outlook is generally asserting itself, with one of its basic document being the joint “Hungarian Ecumenical Statement” drafted in 1967 by “the Hungarian Roman Catholic and Evangelical Ecumenical Committee Abroad” and published in Stuttgart. With regard to the practical implementation of the principle of ecumenism, the proposal calling for the creation of an ecumenical liturgy by the end of this year goes the farthest.

Parallel to the Geneva Accord on Refugees, the decree dealing with emigrants and refugees from the various countries and entitled “The Exiled Family” (“Exul familiae”) issued in 1952 by Pope Pius XII, and the decree “Guiding Principles for the Spiritual Care of Emigrants” (Metu proprio “Instructio de pastorali migrationum cura”) issued by Pope Paul VI in 1969 made it the right and duty of the local bishops to organize spiritual pastoral centers abroad and to fill them with clergymen with a knowledge of the Hungarian language. The bishop concerned, on the other hand, may request the Hungarian bench of bishops to provide suitable priests to look after the Hungarian faithful. Following admission into the EU, the Hungarian Catholic church will in all likelihood face the need to also train its future priests how to serve Hungarian faithful abroad. Although the Hungarian Catholic church is clearly aware of the problem, it is at present not in a position to transfer priests abroad by referring primarily to the shortage of clergymen. The priests born abroad or those who settled there who know Hungarian and work as foreign language clergymen can accept service among Hungarians only with the explicit permission of the highest church authority of the receiving country. Considering the general shortage of priests, the bishops show decreasing inclination to grant such a permission and would rather promote the assimilation of the new arrivals in the local churches.

In the Protestant communities in the West (there are some 100,000 Protestants in West Europe, of whom 5% to 10% are active community members compared to an estimated 2.5% to 5% in North America where the absolute number of Hungarian Protestants is not known), the replacement of pastors is to some extent easier than in the case of the Catholic church. This is due to the non-international character of the church hierarchy and to the fact that a large number of young Protestant pastors attend the post-graduate courses of the big Western universities (in Geneva, The Netherlands, and the USA) and perform pastoral work in the communities of the diaspora during their stay abroad.

Church-directed education in the diaspora in the West takes place only in the framework of so-called weekend schools. The educational work of the Hungarian gymnasium in Burg-Kastl in Germany is traditionally permeated by a strong ecumenical church outlook. The St. Imre Gymnasium of the Abbey of the St. Gellért Benedictine Order in Sao Paulo formally stands under the jurisdiction of the Head Abbey of Pannonhalma in Hungary but is not a Hungarian-language educational institute.

The seat of the Hungarian Catholic bishops in the West is in Toronto, Canada, and Hungarian prelates coordinate pastoral work and the various tasks and activities of spiritual life in the more populous Hungarian communities in the various Western countries.

[Quelle: <http://www.htmh.hu/archivum/churches.htm>]