The Christian Scene in Eastern Europe

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The fact that a Hungarian has been asked to contribute a paper on the theme of Christian hope in Europe's future might suggest that a ray of hope for European Christianity is expected from the eastern edge of our continent: *ex oriente lux*. Can my message reassure the aging and, in many respects, decadent Christianity of the west?

Many outward signs have indeed been pointing in this direction. I do not believe, however, that we can judge simply from the recent papal visit to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Though spectacular crowds on our television screens have an eminent value for religious propaganda, we in the west expect something more behind these scenes. My real task should therefore be a foray into the background of the east European landscape.

My foray will be limited, since I do not trust myself outside the confines of my native Hungary. It will be uncertain, since I am going to speak of a situation reminding us of the very beginning: '...and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep'. At the same time we can feel that 'the Spirit of God was brooding over the chaos' which the last forty years of desert wandering 'uncreated' in a part of our common European homeland.

In evaluating those nightmarish forty years I shall first take a look into the past, then assess the circumstances of the 'soft' revolution of 1989, a revolution that has not only changed the geography of our continent but also has begun to shape the image of the Church to come. Then I shall look at the problems arising from this new situation and, finally, I shall suggest that the problems of the east are also our challenge in the west as we face the future of Christianity.

1 The past

We can easily see that the last forty years have irretrievably destroyed the Church and the churches as *they used to be before the war*. By this blunt statement, of course, I do not mean the destruction of Christianity or of the Church as *its image*, or rather as *its mystery is about to emerge in the wake of Vatican II*. The 'uncreation' has been done; we are at the dawn of something new.

In the case of Hungary the loss is obvious . Before the war the Church was a political force within an already declining feudal society. This can be said not only of the Roman Church, which claimed 70% of the people of a nominally Christian country, but also of the other major denominations.[1] This powerful Church held priority in a country which, up to the expulsion

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of the Turks in the 17th century, used to be entirely Protestant. Its head, the Archbishop of Esztergom, was the second dignitary after the king. The churches were also the richest landowners in the country.[2] Buttressed by wealth, the political influence of the churches was just as remarkable as their cultural and social engagement[3]

After some abortive attempts between the wars to divest itself of these riches, it was the Soviet occupation of Hungary which freed the Church of what had already proved to be a burden. It was the beginning of a systematic campaign against the Church, or rather, against religion as such. What ensued was the progressive spoliation of everything for which the Church and, indeed, christian believers stood. I shall characterize this process in four stages.

(a) The forties set the scene. In the 1945 elections, held under the supervision of the allied forces, the Communist Party with only 16.7% of the votes was clearly defeated.[4] In the following years the party's strategy was mainly directed against its political opponents. One after the other the leading non-communist politicians were brutally eliminated and in 1947 new elections were held in which the Communists and Social Democrats obtained a relative majority of 40%. The unscrupulous methods by which this victory was won are by now well known.[5] By 1949 the fledgling popular democracy had set the pattern for the next forty years: the Social Democrats amalgamated with the Communists and parliamentary elections were held with only one list.

The forties saw the beginning of an anti-religious programme directed by Moscow. In 1948/1949 the Uniate Church in Romania was abolished and its bishops imprisoned. Around 400 Polish priests were arrested and in Hungary a series of mock trials against priests were initiated. Church schools were nationalised in Czechoslovakia and Poland and this happened too in Hungary in spite of the resistance of Cardinal Mindszenti and the hierarchy. The Cardinal, up to his arrest in December 1948, was a stumbling block for the regime since he gathered behind him not only Catholics but also all the remaining forces of 'reaction' against a communist dictatorship. Only future historians will be able realistically to assess the policy of this formidable prelate of Swabian origin who since then has become a symbolic figure. By striking the shepherds the sheep will be scattered.

(b) Throughout the 1950's the principle of divide and rule was applied to the different satellite states in different ways. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary it involved the abolition of religious orders and fostering of associations of collaborating priests. In Poland the Catholics under Wyszynski proved a harder challenge and the campaign was directed against individual bishops. In Yugoslavia, after the harsh treatment of the clergy, especially the Croats, Tito favoured a more lenient policy whereas the Uniates and Latin Catholics of Romania bravely faced martyrdom.

Not so the bishops of Hungary who in 1950 let themselves be blackmailed into a dubious agreement with the regime. The pressure came mainly from the mass deportation and barbarous internment of around 4000

of the then 10,000 male and female religious. In this agreement Mindszenti's successors entered into a fatal bargain: the internment of religious was finished but their communities were dispersed and they were forbidden to perform any priestly or social service. The bishops implicitly acquiesced in the nationalisation of schools and hospitals for the 'concession' of keeping eight schools, where both teachers and pupils were under strict state supervision. Officials imposed by the state and then blackmailed clerics kept the Church under surveillance from within. The agreement did not make life easier: five of the negotiating bishops were tried or interned and the faithful were systematically intimidated.

The bloodshed of 1956 brought no relief. As in Czechoslovakia, so also in Hungary there were attempts to form an underground Church, yet the exodus of around 100, 000 refugees, among them a great number of ex-religious, made the divisive policy of the government easier. The clandestine work of priests and religious was soon strangled.[6]

(c) In the 1960's and 1970's the inner division of the churches was now complete. The official Church was dominated by the very effective ministerial department of Church Affairs (the AEH), which survived up to 1989 under the formidable Imre Miklós. Bishops and their vicars did what they were told to do. Admissions to seminaries and the ordination of priests, the deployment of clergy, including the removal of successful priests from their flocks, was legitimated by the hierarchy.[7] This resulted in opposition between the higher and lower clergy, between the *raison d'état* of a manipulated hierarchy and the pastoral needs of still vigorous young priests with their ever decreasing congregations.

Between 1950 and 1970 the number of the clergy in all major denominations was reduced to a third of its former level, participation in religious instruction (still officially tolerated in schools) fell from 80% in the 1950's to 10% in the 1970's to 4% in the 1980's, and the practice of religion (though never officially surveyed) fell by a larger proportion that in western secularised countries. Religious literature, and therefore acquaintance with Vatican II, was negligible and attempts at ecumenical contact were suspect or even explicitly forbidden. Given this state of a dissevered Church, the Vatican itself, in my opinion, turned its coat. The new *Ostpolitik* of 1974 was introduced with the best of intentions: 'let's save what we can of traditional structures since the present regime is here to stay'. The theory then may have been correct:Mindzsenti's vacant see along with others had to be filled. Some institutions (but not the religious orders) were secured and the new primate in the person of László Lékai was entrusted with a gradual rehabilitation of a humiliated church. The policy of 'small steps' followed by Lékai was, in a certain sense, legitimated by the highest authority of the party.

These steps, however, proved minimal and were the last remnant of 'ecclesiastical Stalinism' lagging behind new and unforeseen events. There was a growing uncertainty among the so called Marxists which at the end of the 1980's led to the final dissolution of the marxist-leninist system. In the

1970's, however, this was still a long way off. Quite a few of the younger generation of communists saw that the 'opium for the people' does not seem to vanish by historical necessity. On the contrary, there was an obvious interest in, or even renewal of religious life, especially among young Christians, laity and clergy alike. It was strong enough to counterbalance the gradual dissolution of official and traditional religiosity in the various churches. Kádár's regime, though it officially maintained its anti-religious policy, realised the lack of social and ethical values and, complaining about the apathy of the masses, expected a remedy from the renewal of religious culture. This is why Christian protests against suppression were not immediately stifled and why practising Christians were allowed to make international contacts. Their avid interest in what was new in the Church formed a consensus apart from, and sometimes against, their manipulated Church leaders.

During the 1970's *Christian Basic Communities* emerged in various denominations. Their number is estimated at four to six thousand.[8] Though their members could be arrested and charged with illegal conspiracy, still these groups proliferated. The legendary gatherings of Catholic groups of mainly young people at the village of Nagymaros has become a yearly event. These meetings and summer camps have been an invigorating experience of living Christianity. Relatively few priests (mostly the younger ones), intellectuals and other working people were trained to lead these groups, to provide them with scarce reading material and to preside over their common prayers.[9]

Outside the framework authorised by the state and hierarchy, these groups were not controllable and proved a nuisance to both AEH and to Lékai and his priestly bureaucrats. It was only at the instigation of Rome and with the permission of AEH that Lékai took part in one of their meetings at Nagymaros. The main thing for Lékai was the assurance that they were not sectarians but obedient to the bishops. However the Cardinal's tolerance was soon to be shattered. When members of one of the oldest groups, led by Fr György Bulányi began to advocate the cause of conscientious objectors, AEH and Lékai were alarmed, both jointly condemning the refusal of military service. Twenty-four 'bulányists', among them an eminent mathematician, were imprisoned. Bulányi's clandestine publications were subjected to inquisitorial scrutiny which went right up to the Congregation of the Faith in Rome. Although Bulányi himself was cleared of a charge of heresy, Lékai now distinguished between good and bad basic communities and dealt with them accordingly. The division was now radically affecting even the movements of committed Christians who, on the basis of their experience, wanted to build a Church from below without opting out of the traditional framework.[10]

(d) The Church's inner strife lasted on into the 1980's. What characterised this last decade of a declining system, was the pretence (mainly for the benefit of the west) of a total harmony between a communist state and the churches. It was the era of dialogue between Marxists and

Christians. The official party line was 'we do not regard *a priori* religion and religious people as political enemies'.[11] Unlike Czechoslovakia and Romania, this pretence was meant to convince public opinion within and without the country that Hungary enjoyed full religious freedom. It was claimed that 50—60% of Hungarians professed to some religious belief and this 'fact' was widely broadcast by bishops and collaborators in the west but, as everyone now knows, it proved to be a public lie which, up to the 'soft' revolution, was eagerly believed by all and sundry. [12]

2 The 'Soft' Revolution of 1989

The sequence of events in the summer of 1989 are well known. Although Hungary's key role is appreciated by every country concerned, that the unexpected happened was due neither to Hungary's courageous action nor to its Church, domesticated as it was by a communist regime. No doubt, the Evangelical Church in what was then East Germany, the firmness of Cardinal Frantisek of Prague and the courage of Pastor Tökés of Timesoar in Romania were in the forefront, but the end of the system in the east was due to Moscow at last realising the bankruptcy of the system. Because a liberalising erosion was already at work, Hungary was the country in which Moscow could experiment with a possible way out from the impasse. This is why a group of well-trained and intelligent politicians, members of the party, were allowed to take the initiative: frontiers were opened, armed confrontations avoided and, in October, the Berlin Wall was pulled down. The madness of a system was killed off, at least in Hungary, from within the communist party itself. The Hungarian man in the street did not directly contribute to its final demise. The freedom of a new era was the surprise gift of history.

Christians, no matter how many of them were resisting and protesting, no matter how many of them came under the wheels of forty years of tyranny, have unwittingly become the beneficiaries of a radically changed situation. Theirs is now the task of drawing up the balance sheet of forty years and of evaluating the chances offered. They face a new challenge. My conviction is *first* that this challenge is not restricted to the newly liberated churches in the east but extends to the whole of Europe. *Secondly*, I am convinced that it is not the change itself, but the sufferings and errors of forty years which can teach a lesson to the west and foster a new Christian hope for Europe and for world-wide Christianity. It depends on whether we look upon this past as a painful episode in hell or as a purgatory from which we may learn lessons for the future.

Wilhelm Zaunder speaks of this 'soft' revolution as a '*Gorbatschowske Wende*', comparing the revolution under Gorbachev with that under Constantine in the 4th century.[13] His analogy, however, has far more dissimilarities than similarities with our present situation. True, both changes were introduced for the political and economic revival of the states concerned and the role of the churches and of religious renewal was only implicit therein but, unlike the 4th century, we are not awaiting a time when

a Theodosius will declare Christianity to be the state religion. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's perestroika recalls the role of Cyrus who allowed—God knows under what alien pressure—the new exodus of the Jewish people from their Babylonian captivity. However, their newly gained freedom not only led to the spectacular rise of Jewish devotion but also, under Ezra and Nehemiah, to the practical end of prophecy and to the gradual stiffening of religious formalities. Neither Cyrus nor Gorbachev are true liberators but, I believe, they are means used in God's inscrutable guidance of human history. The liberation itself will follow in working through the birth pangs of a new beginning.

3 The problems of the new situation

My purpose is not to speak of all the seemingly insurmountable problems which beset the new-born democracies of the east. My question is whether or not Christians in those churches are capable of dealing with the utter novelty of this situation.

As an outsider whose roots are nonetheless in the soil of his native Hungary, I see the main difficulty as the new type of men and women which was brought about by the last forty years. This *homo post-marxisticus* is now the subject of Christian evangelisation. *Homo post-marxisticus* is everywhere present—including within the Church and within its hierarchy.

Although the 'soft' revolution has swept away state control it has left the hierarchy with a mentality conditioned by the initial terror and then by the ingrained dependency on state directives . In the public and political life of the new democracies Church officials are ill at ease and, in clerical circles, the saying prevails 'Let's wait and see what happens'.[14]

Right from the beginning there was a fear that the aging clergy would be inclined to take up again a pattern of action they learned from the Church in the past. Their tendency towards restoration is obvious, although they are not strong enough to start a renewed Church where it left off in 1945.[15]

A third source of difficulty seems to be a still prevalent distrust of lay participation in the running of the Church. Although in the period of gradual liberalisation of the 1980's a good number of lay people took a vivid interest in theology, either by taking correspondence courses or even by enrolling at the one remaining theological school, very few of them could be employed by the Church.[16]

The restoration of religious orders in August 1989 along with the repeal of the dubious 1950 agreement between hierarchy and state was one of the main harbingers of the new era. By January 1990 fifty-nine religious orders or congregations were registered.[17] At the moment there seems no lack of vocations: it has become fashionable to join an order. However, the reemployment of an aged generation of hitherto ex-religious meets considerable difficulties. Bishops were happy to fill their vacant parishes with aging religious but one must ask whether this fulfils their special vocation. The orders lost all their possessions and hence there arises a

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dilemma: should one insist on a wholesale restitution from an insolvent state or accept present penury and bravely look for a new form of religious life?

Finally, let me mention the gravest difficulty—not exclusive for the Church but for the whole new society of *homo post-marxisticus*. It is the result, if I may so put it, of a darwinian survival of the fittest. On the one hand, Christians themselves are of this ilk, since they come from the same society and, on the other hand, believers are called to live with and witness their faith to this *homo post-marxisticus*. It is said that this new type of man and woman has lost the values one could presuppose in the old civilisation. This was already recognised in the 1980's even by communists who then tried to remedy the situation by allowing some Christian institutions to take up their old work. What they, and Church leaders too, did not realise was that institutions, however inevitable they are, do not automatically change the basic characteristics of people. Rather the structures of social living are made by people and their institutions mirror the mentality, the *Weltanschauung* and implicit values of those who created them.

To illustrate this I cannot avoid generalising phenomena which one inevitably meets in the countries of Eastern Europe.[18] Firstly, there is a lack of *social responsibility*. One is accustomed to obey the initiatives of an omnipotent state and what is thus achieved is of no concern to the individual. One may be passively affected by it but it is not one's doing. Consequently there is a lack of commitment to anything that goes beyond one's immediate interest. By interest I mean the pragmatic usefulness of anything made available or tolerated by society. The roots of this practical materialism lie in the instinctive refusal to take seriously anything that apparently comes from any ideals or ideologies. What really counts is the individual's palpable gain and not what may or may not advance the common purpose. An example of this is the apathy of average citizens towards their democratic duties.

Secondly, there is the *misuse of words*. People in public life have learned to live up to lies and pretenses, while trying to survive in their own little world. One said 'yes' to the party line and kept one's opinions to oneself. Where the omnipotent party decides what is true or false, what is good or evil, one counts as a deviant or as mentally ill if one, at least verbally, doesn't follow suit. At the present time the absence of the policing of private opinion leads to a social disorientation causing utter mistrust towards anything institutionalised, including the Church. This leads to an inhuman attitude towards others, an attitude indoctrinated by the marxist thesis of class warfare. One is inclined to see others as enemies, ready to offer negative criticism, exacting the best for one's own sake and this very often in the manner of true proletarian roughness. In these circumstances it is hard to expect modesty and readiness for self-sacrifice. People collectively reject marxist solidarity but its vacant place is not yet replaced by a new system of human values.[19]

This sombre picture of the new *homo post-marxisticus* may have been

exaggerated. It raises, however, the inevitable question for us European Christians: Are these flaws, resulting from a now defunct system, exclusively limited to east European countries? Or are they characteristics of any other post-christian society in the west? The answer, I fear, is yes: the difference between east and west is merely quantitative and it consists in the fact that people born or reared behind the old iron curtain have made a principle of this kind of behaviour. While in the west one may pay lip-service to the old set of values and live according to another one, people in the east are at least sincere: they have brought to the fore what we in the west practise.

4 The Church and European Christianity

Although I have restricted my presentation to a particular region of our continent, I have not lost sight of my original purpose. It was and still is about the whole of European Christianity on its way to the third millennium. It is about our Christian identity in the future.

The account of events in the past forty years and the analysis of the present situation in countries still divided by wealth and poverty and by divergent historical development were meant to emphasise, despite all differences, our common destiny. The future of Europe rests on *solidarity* between east and west and their responsibility for the north-south divide, indeed, for the whole planet.

Solidarity (which I believe has hitherto given coherence to this small and rugged portion of our earth) means *shared responsibility*. For the east-west divide it consists in the fact that the west is just as answerable for good and evil in the east as the east has a role in the ongoing history of the west. Responsibility in its deeper sense does not necessarily presuppose direct causation. It is rather a readiness to take upon oneself an apparently alien lot, to make the burden of others our burden and their hopes our expectation.

All this sounds rather abstract and theoretical, but the ills of east European society, the problems of Christians facing the new *homo post-marxisticus* are basically the same as they are in the west. There is but a quantitative difference. This insight can become the ground of our *solidarity in sin*, or as Karl Rahner used to put it, a shared 'concupiscent' situation. Can we recognize not only our solidarity in sin but also the attempts of eastern countries to overcome it? Can we so called western Christians learn from their experience in keeping and building anew their Christianity in circumstances more adverse than ours ever were?

I still believe that in the past forty years the most profitable experience was the renewal of Christianity through the movement of *basic communities*. Their sudden surfacing in the sea of contradiction, their proliferation in a society more thoroughly secularised that in the west, can be regarded as an *anticipation of the Church to come*, the ground from which we can extrapolate its future shape. What are the Church's traits emerging from this experience?

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The future European Church will live permanently in the *diaspora of a pluralistic society*. Christians will have to give up the anachronistic dream of a party-political Christianity. They will have to renounce the claim of possessing the key-answers for the ills of society. The Church will have to be an association of searchers and questioners, ready to learn anew the worth of human living. They cannot but become and remain men and women in continual dialogue with the concrete world for which their faith commitment is meant. In and through this dialogue they will, on the one hand, realise their own involvement in the evils of their society and, on the other, learn to read the 'signs of the time', the good hidden in evil which nevertheless opens up to the future. As an outsider I may idealise, but in my contacts with basic communities in Hungary I have sensed this attitude to life which is the human basis of faith as well as the presupposition of the Church to come.

Yet, beyond this, the heart of their experience seems to have been that faith and commitment to what it contains is neither a matter of indoctrination imposed by society nor is it a sudden illumination of the individual on the road to Damascus. It is rather shared with, received from and, at once, transmitted to the other: neither my faith nor even my commitment is solitary; it occurs within a fellowship. To extrapolate this communitarian experience: the Church of the future will build itself up *from below* and will have to exist as a *communion* and not as a 'perfect' society within the given social environment. This means that the inevitable structures of this communion will have to be *multiform*, depending on the human premises of its members. Even Roman Catholics shall have to qualify, if not to give up, the claim that the structures of a visible Church, its institutions, are derived from above and set unalterably by the will of their founder. If Christ has indeed founded a Church, he has let it become such as its followers in their own historical circumstances have shaped it.

The tension between hierarchy and basic communities, which belongs to the history of this experiment, was not only inevitable because of state-control, but also because of the nature of group versus authority. It is, on the one hand, obvious that small communities tend to become exclusive and sectarian; yet on the other, a society whose leaders are imposed on the rest with little or no participation of ordinary members tends to become authoritarian or even despotic. Its leaders will form a class of its own with the claim of blind and uniform obedience enforced or expected from their subjects. Although this tension will remain in the Church to come, it can, however, be mitigated by the already growing insight that the Church of the future will be a *free association* of laymen and laywomen who are not only led, but leading, not only evangelised, but evangelising. Those of the laity who consecrate their whole life to the service of the community can be made participants in the special ministry in order to maintain the life of a Church universal. The later Rahner was convinced that the consecrated ministry of this universal Church comprises a much wider scope than what is at present realised. Nonetheless even such an extended ministry will not

be able to abolish the tension which was bitterly experienced by basic communities in Hungary .

The Catholic Church of the future will have to learn to live with the *plurality of theologies* within its confines and with the *plurality of confessions* which do not square with its own. The future of ecumenism will not only be an affair of gentle contacts between various denominations, but a tolerance of and readiness to learn from different thought patterns of theological schools. This tolerance, inside and outside the borders of the Catholic Church should be on both sides since the truths of the Christian faith can never be exhaustively mastered by either of the parties in dialogue. Hence a kernel of truth on the other side can challenge the Church to rethink its own positions or enrich them with an alien insight.

Certainly, as in the past, ultimate decisions in matters of faith will have to be taken, whether it be on the dogmatic level (which since Vatican II seems to be out of fashion) or on the level of practical rulings. In these, however, no central authority may rule by power, but through the conviction of its arguments. A model of an over-centralised Church ruling by *Diktat* and thereby creating a double-think among its members will resemble the system of a past period of European history already pulled down with the Berlin Wall.

The focus of a future Church, as in the experience of basic communities, will have to remain the bishop of Rome, wherever he may reside. He will, however, be responsible not only as an individual to God alone, but to the whole Church. A Church which is built on the solidarity of its members will have no privileged exceptions: even the newly-baptised is as much a member as the head. The Pope's solidarity with the episcopal college of the worldwide Church is already the teaching of Vatican II. The Church of the future will have to extend the same to the whole body of Christian believers.

The whole *raison d'être* of the Church lies in its mission to humankind, indifferent as humankind is to its message. Thus the Church will have to learn the *language* of its contemporaries and Christians will have to *live their traditional values in a new way.* A Christian's ethical stance cannot be just an obedient response to demands coming from above, but must be the manifestation of one's own convictions made visible to one's non-Christian brothers and sisters. The identity of future Christians will not be in the uniformity of their behaviour but in the transparency of joy and happiness in their lives irradiating their environment.

We could go on dreaming of a Church to come. Yet, I believe, it is in the making, even if its real shape is hidden in the inscrutable future of our continent. We know that no anticipation projected in time is ever the concrete reality which our children and our children's children will meet. However, the unconditional trust in the coming of this extrapolated future is part and parcel of our Christian faith. And faith which not only trusts but dares to plan its own future is what I call *Christian hope.*

Before finishing, I am still obliged to tell you why I have restricted my

dreams to this rugged bit of our globe. I firmly believe that European Christianity, European theology happens to have its own mission. Rahner, in one of his late articles from 1983, put it this way: European theology with its often overlooked plurality is still the origin of all attempts to express human reflection on faith and on what it contains. This does not mean that this theology is bound to colonise a world outside Europe. It does mean, however, that it is responsible for the basic unity of faith in the non-European theologies of the world-wide Church.[20] From this it follows that European theology can and must become the guardian and, in some way, the norm for other theologies in so far as it keeps its accustomed manner of self-critical thought. It can thus be the mediator of theological reflections arising in different parts of our planet. On the other hand, on contact with these, European theology can learn its own lessons to make its venerable traditions the living soil of a developing thought.

This, however, can only be done, if the basic solidarity of men and women who confess their faith in Jesus the Christ is extended to young Christians and their communities on the other side of the north-south divide. In the west it is already in progress and up to now it seems (understandably) to be absent in the east. Yet Europe, after the total failure of colonialism and the nightmarish threat of an emerging neo-nationalism will be herself, when she—now in another form—recognises her ancient mission.

Romano Guardini in one of his reminiscences tried to put his finger on the basis of Europe's historical identity.[21] It has come about through the marriage of Hebrew and Greek mentality, yet neither Greece nor a Jewish Israel could survive . There must have been a cohesive force in Christianity which could explain her unique identity. I named this force solidarity and reciprocal responsibility within and without our continent. If I am right, and if Europe can further build on this foundation there is hope for Christian identity in the future of Europe and, at the same time, hope for a world-wide Church .

1 Calvinists were 20% and Lutherans 4–5%. In Poland Catholics numbered 95%, in Bohemia and Moravia 30%, in Slovakia 50%, in Slovenia and Croatia almost 95%, in East Germany only 7%.

2 In 1928 the Catholic Church owned 1,197,909 acres, the other churches 85,365 acres of land. By 1975 the Catholic Church had lost 92% of its holdings by land reform. See *A magyar katolikusok szenvedései 1944–1989. Havasy Gylu dokumentumgyüjteménye*, Budapest 1991, 25 (hereinafter HGy).

3 Approximately 40% of schools and hospitals were controlled by the Catholic Church, not always to the benefit of the poor. In the following I rely on the extended ms. of Miklós Tomka: *Politika, vallás és Magyarországon lözött*. An abridged version was submitted to *New Hungarian Quarterly* 1991.2.

4 Cf HGy, 28ff.

5 As a Jesuit novice I had no vote, along with about 1 million other 'suspects' in the 1947 election. Nuns were disenfranchised under the charge of prostitution. See HGy, 30.

6 Between 1950 and 1958 no less than six Jesuit provincials were imprisoned until the last one was forced to admit state control. The tyranny of the antireligious state worked from within.

7 In 1961 another wave of arrests led to priests being imprisoned. At the instigation of

AEH there appeared an episcopal document approving the trials.Even if the latter were a forgery, the bishops did not distance themselves from it. See Tomka, *op. cit.*

8 Tomka estimates the number at 7000. Cf *Hanyatlás vagy megújjulás, Beszélgetés a mai vallásosságról,* an interview in *Elet és irodalom*, July 1985.

9 The beat culture undoubtedly helped their association. Beat music, especially that of Jenö Sillye, and musical mystery plays have become a popular feature of the whole movement. Cf Kamarás István, *Lelkierömü Nagymaroson*, Budapest 1989.

10 In 1956 a devout Catholic student who took refuge in England told me that in these years they had learnt to read between the lines of pastoral letters. They used to know what had been dictated by the ever-present state officials and collaborators. Another went so far as to say 'We have learned living as Christians and Catholics without our priests, we need them only for administering the sacraments.'

11 From an interview with Imre Miklós, 1988.

12 Cf P. Horváth, 'Szekularizáció és vallásossag', *Táradalmi Szemle*; M. Tomka, 'Stages of Religious Change', *ibid.*

13 W. Zauner, 'Christsein im neuen Europa', *Theologisch–praktische Quartelschrift*, Linz 1991, 119–127.

14 The communists tolerated the survival of the Theological Faculty of Budapest University. When the new regime intended to restore the *status quo ante*, the opportunity to work alongside other scholars was missed. The body of teachers left the decision to the Congregation for Religious Education and they now work in a separate Catholic institution dangerously dependent on Vatican directives. There is an attempt to build up a Catholic University. Where will its teachers come from? After 40 years there is no Catholic intelligentsia left to catch up with new trends in western literature. This perhaps accounts for the growing suspicion of western decadence on the part of the older generation, from whom the teachers will come. Like in 19th century Dublin and Kensington, this attempt to found a Catholic University is perhaps, in the words of K. Rahner *'ein Marsch ins Ghetto'*.

15 Cf the recent wrangle over the re-introduction of R.E. in schools. The present solution of the state subsidising optional classes outside the normal timetable has angered the main body of Catholics. An old-fashioned tension between anticlerical liberalism and a well-meant dream of a captive audience compelled to learn about Christian values has emerged. No one seems to have questioned whether the Church has the resources to run a comprehensive R.E. programme. See the debate about liberalism and Christianity in *Vigilia* 1991/5, 358–369.

16 At present 40% of the students at the Theological School are lay. They see little or no chance of employment by the Church, despite the menacing scarcity of priestly vocations. Many, especially female, students complain about their treatment by their teachers. Doubtless the Church lacks the financial means to employ laypeople but few of the present clergy see its future inevitability.

17 Cf Tomka's article cited in Note 3 above.

18 In what follows I am indebted to a ms. by Imre András' *Neue Herausforderungen in einem künftig pluralistischen Osteuropa*.

19 One could instance how Hungary is first on the list of suicides and high on the lists of abortions, alchoholism and divorce. The population is decreasing and as such dwindling into a future which is now officially free.

20 Cf K. Rahner, 'Aspects of European Theology', *Theological Investigations* XXI, London 1988, 78-98, 84.

21 G. Guardini, *Stationen und Rückblicke*, Würzburg 1956, 9-23.

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