

tial importance, provided it is well-informed about the *Sitz im Leben* of this theology. Obviously, this dialogue needs to be able to show brotherly sympathy for any "Church in a socialist society" which is seeking the right way, but the dialogue partners need to have a thorough familiarity with the situation if they are not simply, out of a naïve feeling of "brotherhood", to continue encouraging a Church within a particular socialist society in the direction of simple conformism.

## Slanders Rejected

### Declaration by leading officials of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

1. At the meeting of the Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee in the Summer of 1980 in Augsburg the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary invited the next LWF Assembly to Budapest. After a thoroughgoing discussion, the Executive Committee accepted this invitation by an overwhelming majority. This decision means that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary — a genuine "minority church" with less than half a million members — was able to provide the first opportunity for a world-wide Christian meeting to be held in a socialist country. The government of the Hungarian People's Republic has guaranteed the granting of entry visas to all the delegates. Our Church and congregations have hereby assumed a great burden and accepted a great task [ . . . ]

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary hopes that the coming Assembly will make an important contribution towards deepening the fellowship of the "Lutheran world family", and towards strengthening its unity in Christ and its service for peace and justice in our world [ . . . ]

2. While engaged in preparing for the Assembly, we have been shocked to note that certain ecclesiastical and political circles, press media and individuals in some countries in the West are busy making difficulties for the host country and Church and trying to intensify political antagonisms between West and East and conflicts between our different social systems. This clearly goes against the task of the Church of Christ which is to build bridges in a world of conflicts and tensions, to work for understanding and mutual confidence, and to be a "peacemaker".

We are profoundly shocked by the fact that certain ecclesiastical circles in the West want to assail and slander our Church, which lives in a socialist society and tries to remain faithful to her Lord Jesus Christ; they attack and slander the theology and diaconia of our Church, her relationship to the State, her leaders, and — above all — our presiding bishop Dr Zoltán Káldy. Appealing to the Eighth Commandment of God, we condemn

these slanders and insinuations and resolutely reject them.

3. Thus we reject the insinuations which appeared in the March number of the periodical *Lutherische Monatshefte* from the pen of Professor Emeritus Vilmos Vajta. In his article entitled "Umstrittene Theologie der Diakonie" (Dispute over the "Theology of Diaconia") he attacks the theology of our Church as a theology of "compliance" (*Konformismus*) which — not unlike the notorious theology of the "German Christians" under Hitler — "has become a part of the ideological apparatus of Marxism". He characterises this theology as being oblivious to the "suffering of the disciples", and as having been simply foisted on the parishioners by the church leadership.

These serious charges are made by one who for the last 42 years has lived in the West, who never experienced with us the sufferings of our country under Fascism, at which time it became a battlefield, or the reconstruction of a war-ravaged land from its ruins, or the laborious efforts of his Church to find her way in a new situation, but who nonetheless believes that he is qualified to lecture to and to censure his former Church.

Our Church never travelled on the road of compliance, never took the way of the "German Christians". She is resolutely against any kind of ideological syncretism. And she never shirks suffering which is imposed on us by God. Everybody familiar with the "theology of diaconia" knows very well that it is a Christ-centred theology. Moreover, it is untrue to say that our church leaders want to foist this theology on the pastors and congregations. It is out of conviction that they follow this theological thinking, especially through their conduct.

[The rest of the article rejects as "slanderous" comments in the Western media about the conduct of Bishop Káldy, particularly with regard to his alleged efforts to win support for his candidacy for the post of President of the Lutheran World Federation, who will be chosen by the LWF Assembly in Budapest — *Ed.*]

Budapest, 22 June 1983

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