Basic Characteristics of Hungarian Church Politics

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by Emmerich András

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Hungarian church politics are significant in a two-fold manner: On the one hand, Hungary was from the very beginning an important partner of the Vatican in the latter's Ostpolitik, i.e., the Vatican's willingness to enter into a dialogue with the countries of Eastern Europe. On the other, those Eastern European countries which have not yet succeeded in reaching a working relationship with the Catholic Church look with great interest to Hungary's church politics since, beyond being in a position to describe its relations with the church as positive, Hungary can also point to actual benefits for the state resulting from this working relationship. All of this places Hungary's church politics in a position of acting as a potential model for church-state relationships in other Eastern European countries.

In the following, we are interested in presenting the basic characteristics of the Hungarian church politics referred to above, as seen in two studies issued by Secretary of State Imre Miklós, who is the president and person in charge of the State Office for Church Affairs. One of the studies, entitled "A New Type of Relations," appeared in January 1977 in the materialist monthly journal Világosság [The Light]. A German edition of what is essentially the same study, though brought to date and expanded through the

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addition of certain concrete details, was given to representatives of the press at a press conference held by Secretary of State Miklós in Vienna on September 10, 1979. The special occasion or purpose for holding the press conference remained unstated; its topic was today's Hungarian church politics. We have chosen this latter study as the second document upon which to base the present analyses. In our commentary on the study's individual points, we will also examine the anticipated effects of Hungary's church politics upon the life of the Hungarian Catholic Church.

The Role of the Churches in a Socialist Society

In the relations between church and state, Hungarian church politics is naturally interested in promoting that concept which it considers the one valid, scientific plan for society and which it fully endorses, namely Marxism, although this does not exclude the fact that even within the Hungarian Communist Party itself different ideas exist as to the way church politics should be carried out. Taking this situation into consideration the extent and manner in which the Catholic Church can, or should, contribute to the development of socialist society was laid down. In his stand on the church, Hungary's Secretary of State Miklós states that "directly after the Second World War [the churches], in their structures, their ideologies, [and] their social ties, were still representatives of an earlier social order; [they still functioned] as one of the pillars of feudalistic, capitalistic society." In socialist society, Miklós stressed, the Church has a different function than under capitalism. The church of the present, he went on to say, "is completely different from the church which was an integral part of the societies of the past and functioned as a protector of their privileges."--"We demand from the church a positive contribution in the development of socialism!" Generally speaking, this "constructive effort" of the church can take place on two levels: It is above all expected that cooperation or participation of the church take place "in various areas of public life, in various institutions, in state and societal organizations..., in Parliament, in county and communal councils, in the patriotic People's Front and the National Peace Council." The church can also carry out a positive role within socialist society, such as in the defense of freedom, in the promotion and encouragement of socialist national unity, for which the development of an
The atmosphere of trust is especially important, in defending societal and personal property, in spreading the ideas of humanism, in concern for the people, in encouraging the carrying out of one's duties to the fullest possible degree, in the fight against crime, in the promotion of the modern national inheritance and cultural values (e.g., in matters concerning the protection of art treasures, the care of sacred scholarly collections, [and] historical studies)." Personal religious faith too can play a role "in the private life of individuals, in interpersonal relationships, in the protection of moral values, and in the evaluation of other norms."

It is also as a result of this cooperation that, in the development of socialism, "national unity has been brought about and secured, and its content and dimensions enriched and expanded."--"We are satisfied with the results [produced] up to now in the development of the relations of Hungary's churches with the socialist state. It is with this in mind that in its meeting on March 28, 1979, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party stated that 'one important factor [contributing to] our harmonious internal political situation is the ordered relationship [existing] between the state and the churches. Our experiences have shown that the majority of the bishops and clergy are interested in maintaining the normal relationship achieved up to now.'"

The second role to be played by the Hungarian churches, according to Secretary of State Miklós, is the maintenance of international relationships: "In the past years, representatives of the churches in Hungary have established international relations and taken active part in international undertakings.... Bilateral relations led to mutual meetings with the representatives of the churches of other countries. The number of church leaders who in recent years either came to Hungary, or left Hungary [to visit some other country] goes well into the hundreds. Important work is being carried on by representatives of the Hungarian churches in the secular and church-sponsored peace movements (World Council of Churches, Christian Peace Conference, Berlin Conference of Catholic Christians, etc.)."

The churches consider the reduction of international tensions and efforts to avert the dangers of war to be one of their special duties. In the international church organizations, Hungarian church leaders were among the first, even during
the era of the Cold War, to call for mutual understanding among the peoples of the earth and point out the possibility and necessity for cooperation between church and state. Their theological and scholarly efforts too contain sharp criticism of imperialistic aspirations, and support for socialism and humanism. Both the Protestant and Catholic Churches of Hungary have assumed an important role in the founding of the international Christian peace movement. The significance of church activities in socialist countries is gaining in importance since interest has begun focusing on the peoples of the Third World, and these people have themselves begun taking an active part in international politics. In those countries in which remnants of colonialism still exist, church efforts which, freed of all ties with imperialism and capitalism, have opened up new possibilities for social progress and Christian relations constitute a new point of orientation.

One of the important goals of the Hungarian churches in their international activity is to play their part in promoting, in accordance with the principles and praxis of peaceful coexistence and political cooperation, a cooperation of progressive forces on an international scale and to support efforts at creating a united front against the forces of imperialism.

Since the Helsinki Agreement . . . , the international activity of the Hungarian churches has generally concerned itself with the correct interpretation and actual observance of the Helsinki Agreement in all the signatory countries.

In summarizing the role of the churches, Secretary of State Miklós stated, that "all these experiences on national and international levels demonstrate that a new type of relationship [has arisen] between the socialist State and the churches. The churches have developed a new basis for their cooperation [with the State]."

Before proceeding with an analysis, two things must be kept in mind:

1. Secretary of State Miklós speaks of churches. Our concern here is principally with the Roman Catholic Church, especially when speaking of actual situations existing in Hungary. We understand as "church" the community of the faithful in Christ: a visible, organized reality and, at the same time, a supernatural society Since Miklós' understanding of the church is restricted to church as a social, sociological reality, we too will refer to the church
in this sense, although it is impossible to fully exclude the theological significance of the church's nature. It should also be kept in mind that Secretary of State Miklós generally is involved in dealings only with the bishops, i.e., with leading church figures, and with representatives of the Holy See; it is not these persons alone, however, but rather the entire people of God who constitute the church: the bishops, priests, and faithful together.

2. It must also be kept in mind, that in Miklós' references regarding socialism, he is referring to but one specific type of socialism. Today, however, various types of socialism, Marxism, etc., are already referred to. When speaking, for example, of the "development of socialism," one must precisely define the type of socialism meant, the ideology and praxis from which it originates, the concept of human being, social model, and political ethics it embodies, and the extent to which it permits a separation of the elements comprising its system. According to the Catholic position, faith can at times exercise a "critical function" in a concrete situation in order to demythologize ideology and politics, should the need arise, and evaluate everything from the viewpoint of the Kingdom of God and of human salvation.

At the same time, the church sees the power embodied in the state as a force which comes to the aid of the people and concerns itself with their common good. The church gives its support to the state leaders in these efforts, independent of the concrete political form of government. In the present as in the past, the church promotes efforts aiding the common good, though only in the area belonging to the church through the mission entrusted to it by the Gospel.

The Church has always held that it is one's duty to concern himself with the common good, and thus also played a part in educating good citizens for all countries. . . . The common good served by State authority is not achieved in its fullness until the rights of all citizens are protected. A situation where this is not the case will lead to a collapse of society. [It] results in the rebellion of citizens against the [ruling] authority, or a state of repression, intimidation, force, and terror of which the numerous totalitarian regimes of our century have been examples. . . . The right to freedom of religion and conscience is justifiably included among these rights. . . . The Church does
not lay claim to a privilege, but rather to an elementary right. (Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, 17).

The present church politics of Hungary views and evaluates, evidently on the basis of accepted Marxian criticism of religion and on political party principles, the role of the churches, and of religion in general, from the standpoint of political usefulness. Since Marxism views religion as a form of human alienation which is destined to die out through the restructuring of society, the function of the churches too can be considered only temporary. Imre Miklós has clearly stated the areas in which the churches can, or should be, useful: In that they actively participate in the development of socialism, they promote the [internal and foreign political] interests of the state. He is thus less concerned with guaranteeing the individual and societal human rights than with bringing to its fullness the Communism based on dialectical and historical materialism, on radical atheism.

Hungarian church politics accuses Hungary's Catholic Church of having played a direct political role in promoting the previous social order, and also of having been a beneficiary of the injustices of the past. Official church politics emphasizes the justification and necessity which existed for the separation of church and state, and at the same time insists that the Church today, under the new state form, should again assume a political role and participate in carrying out internal and external political aims set up by the country's political leadership. State insistence upon the principle of political usefulness, and special services and positions which have been forcefully elicited from the Church, have had harmful effects upon church life, since they lead to confusion in the Church's understanding of itself, which in turn fosters conflicts. They weaken and hinder the Church in the mission to which it has been called, namely that of preaching the Gospel and giving witness to Christ within the given social order.

The church's adaptation to its new rule, and its involvement in the "development of socialism" takes place within a framework of coercion and constant interference on the part of the state. The state has at its disposal two institutions which, with the help of a large number of civil servants, church members acting as informers, and collaborators, have for all practical purposes all areas of the Church under control, and make certain, through numerous regulations, that the Church puts into practice the political goals
of the state. These institutions are the State Office for Church Affairs, a government agency; and a department of the state police within the Department of the Interior which concerns itself specifically with church matters. Both institutions are entrusted with "caring for" Hungary's churches; they are united in a confused conglomeration of cooperation, rivalry, and differing areas of jurisdiction, though both of them have their own information system. Their national offices are divided according to dioceses, and both institutions have central offices in the various administrative bodies (counties and cities with county rights). Both the large numbers of persons employed by these institutions and also the high rank of these persons give an idea of the extent and authoritativeness of the influence exercised by both institutions on the life of the Church within the framework of their activities.

The State Office for Church Affairs is responsible for matters directly affecting the Church, both in material matters and also those involving personnel. To have an official parish seal made or changed, for example, one must first obtain the State Office's approval; the same holds true for printing Church information, devotional pictures, forms, pastoral letters of the bishops, parish bulletins, etc. Things costing more than 20,000 forints, such as repairs on parish buildings or churches, also require approval. Each filling of a pastoral position requires the explicit, or at least implicit, approval of the State Office for Church Affairs. Should a priest who has already been "approved" by this Office also hold religious instruction classes in a school, this again requires a special permission. According to a 1964 edition of the Catholic newspaper Katolikus Szó [The Catholic word] which appears twice monthly and is the mouthpiece of the Priests for Freedom Movement, no theology student whom the State Office for Church Affairs refuses a work permit should be ordained, since without such a work permit a priest is not allowed to carry out his priestly functions.

The State Office for Church Affairs is also responsible for the salary adjustments, the so-called congrua, of the priests. It is this Office which determined the application of state laws to the Church, and sees that religious freedom is understood and exercised in line with the state's understanding of that concept. It also investigates complaints which arise, approves or forbids trips by priests to other countries, and is in addition, responsible for numerous other matters affecting the Church.
Unmistakable pressure is exerted upon the Church, for example, to ensure that key diocesan administrative posts such as that of chancery director and general vicar are filled by trusted persons friendly to the regime. The auxiliary bishops, who are approved by both the Holy See and the Hungarian State and whose purpose is that of aiding the diocesan bishop in the care of the diocese, have no special tasks for which they are permitted to assume responsibility and, due to this lack of function, are employed within the area of parish activities, an example which makes quite clear that the so-called "cooperation" between Church and State is in this regard nothing more than a catchword since insofar as the state works together with its own trusted persons, it is basically working together with itself.

Religious Freedom

Secretary of State Miklós complained that in matters of religious freedom there existed some uncleanness as to the concept of itself: "There are those who equate the principle of religious freedom with the free activity of religious groups; others, appealing to the same [principle], lay claim to all kinds of social rights." Miklós stressed that in Hungary too freedom of religion and conscience are considered elementary human rights which are not only proclaimed, but also guaranteed, along with their social prerequisites. As for their concrete realization, it was Miklós' opinion that "we do not understand freedom of religion only as freedom to take part in religious ceremonies..., [but also] the right of churches to be involved with the youth, to give religious instruction in the schools, to offer a normal preparation for confirmation, and the right of the theological colleges to also offer correspondence courses. The churches have also developed a lively press activity." "The Hungarian State respects the churches' autonomy, and enables them to carry out their activity, in addition to the regulations stipulated by State laws, in line with their own laws." The concept of autonomy, however, is not to be taken in the usual sense of the word. "The autonomy of the churches too took on a different meaning as a result of the separation of church and state, especially insofar as they accept the form of common understanding of freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion as laid down in the constitution (i.e., also the freedom to distance oneself from religion)."

Secretary of State Miklós stated that two things can hinder freedom of
religion in Hungary: "On the one hand, we must be aware of the fact that the opponents of socialism and progress attempt to use religious faith as a political means." On the other, "the Marxists, the socialists, must also keep in mind that ideological differences and antitheses can never be solved through means of administrative and political power." Miklós unequivocably distances himself from the use of administrative means when stating that "we in no way want to prove through all means and under all circumstances that only we can be right. . . . The success of socialism will not be measured by what we have achieved in the battle against religion."

Miklós sharply criticized all those who in his opinion judge the question of religious freedom in Hungarian church politics from a false standpoint. "The Hungarian churches,"

are still faced with many unjust attacks and abuse coming from various Western, and sometimes even responsible church, publications. . . . It is interesting to note the effort still expended in attempting to apply the forms of the capitalist system to our situation. These are, of course, not applicable to us, as a result of which many people too quickly conclude that the churches in Hungary are not free, the freedom of religion exists by us only on paper, etc. However, the platitudes of the capitalistic social order will never fit our situation. . . . We [who live] in a socialist society are determined to fashion our church politics in line with our situation, [and in a way] with which faithful, Communists, the churches and the state are in agreement.

Freedom of faith and religion is a form of the right to free speech and the right of assembly, which are recognized as basic human rights. It is not a question here of whether these basic human rights are stipulated in the constitution of a country, but of whether the individual, as a religious person, is permitted to live as such privately or together with others. Essential here is the extent to which this legal right, should its exercise be hindered, can be enforced in a country with the help of the courts. Secretary of State Miklós stated that in Hungary too freedom of religion is considered a basic human right, and yet his statements give the impression that in the common exercise of religion it is no longer the right of the individual which is decisive, but rather some type of collective regulation set up either unilaterally by representatives of the state, or one agreed upon by the given
legitimate state and church leaders, i.e., an agreement between two partners whose position is everything but equal. The communal exercise of religion thus no longer emanates from human rights, from natural law, but from the statute law existing at a given time.

Marxism stresses that the human being is a species of living beings, and emphasizes the group aspects. The Christian concept of the human being too stresses human communal aspect; in this personalistic approach to the human being, however, the human being is seen as an individual who, though unique and unreproducible, is open to others and achieves his or her own self-realization through personal relationships and bonds of love with others. The relations with others, the aspect of community, is also an essential factor of religious experience. The right to free exercise of religion thus also includes the communal dimension, as was repeatedly emphasized by Pope Paul II, who referred to the statements of the Second Vatican Council. Let us examine here more closely point 3 of Vatican II's Declaration of Religious Freedom, which the Pope referred to in New York before the United Nations. "The social nature of man itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion, that he should participate with others in religious matters, and that he should profess his religion in community." Point 4 of the same declaration goes on to say that "the freedom from coercion in religious matters, which is the endowment of persons as individuals, is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious bodies are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself."

Secretary of State Miklós' understanding of religious freedom, however, excludes such things as allowance for the possibility that the faithful, on the basis of their individual human right to religious freedom, establish religious communities (e.g., base groups) which would be acceptable to the country's political leadership.

A corroboration of this concept of religious freedom is also evident, for example, in the efforts of Hungarian Church politicians at bringing about a situation where all measures affecting the life of the Church should be issued by the diocesan bishops, who are under the politicians' control. This is also the reason why this "episcopal" system of monocratic church leadership was imposed upon the Protestant churches, whose statutes call for a
"presbyterian" form of government.

If in analyzing this approach, someone, especially from another country, should come to the conclusion that the church in Hungary is not free, then, according to Secretary of State Miklós, he is applying forms of the capitalistic system to the Hungarian situation. On the basis of Miklós' remarks, however, it is not clear what he means here by "forms of the capitalistic system."

It is of course true, as emphasized by Miklós, that the possibilities available today in the area of pastoral activity are greater than those of the Stalin era. The list of regulations stipulating what the church may and may not do has actually grown larger. The Marxian concept of religious freedom permits the state to make the regulations and regimentations imposed upon the church seem to be in harmony with the principle of religious freedom. A significant casuistic has already developed in Hungary as to what is and is not allowed in communal religious expression. The faithful, for example, are allowed to come together in the churches for catechetics or the discussion of religious matters, but the church may not be closed during such meetings. A protest has already been raised about the fact that normal entrance to the church through the main door is blocked off at this time and a side entrance must be used. This sort of casuistry offers vast possibilities for all types of state intervention; one of the preferred "parlor games" in this area is the constantly varying designation of the distinction between allowed religious instruction and forbidden religious propaganda. If, for example, a pupil skips religious instruction classes in the school, which are recognized as officially permitted religious instruction, no attempt by the religion teacher to get the child to attend class again is allowed, since that is considered an act of religious propaganda and is thus forbidden.

In justifying the church political practices described above, reference is made to the principle laid down in the Hungarian constitution of "common interpretation of freedom and conscience on the one hand and, on the other, of the free exercise of religion." According to this principle, religion may not be exercised in a manner which influences others in their freedom to be either a religious or to separate themselves from religion.

On the other hand, the materialistic ideology has the advantages of an all-determinative state "religion": According to educational laws which went
into effect in the school year 1978/79, this ideology is to be taught within
the framework of all educational subjects. A good knowledge of it is a
prerequisite both for university acceptance and for advancement in many fields
of employment. It is propagated by the mass media, by non-school forms of
popular education, etc.

The battle against religion was for a long time carried on through
administrative means. Among the civil servants involved in the concrete tasks
of church politics, there are still today a number of persons who support the
radical approach of the past and are unable to adapt to the more tolerant
church politics of the present, or are unable to fathom how the new course in
church politics will manage to bring about the elimination of religion through
the mutual development of socialism rather than through administrative
suppression of the churches. They cannot see how the common participation of
believers and nonbelievers in the development of socialism, in line with the
Hegelian motto, "Swimming has to be learned in water" is to function as a
"socialist training course" which also extends to the area of faith, or how
the rejection of religion is to come about as a secondary product, as a result
of the transformation effected in the areas of feeling, thinking, and
practical activity (cf. J. Lukács, Socialism and the Critique of Religion). It
even happens that the State Office for Church Affairs protects the exercise of
religion against encroachments by such over-zealous civil servants, since such
negative administrative state action is presently considered harmful rather
than beneficial.

Marxian ideologists and church politicians proceed on the assumption
that hand in hand with the actualization of socialism there will come about a
decrease in religiousness, an increase in the secularization of social
consciousness, and the spread of technologically-based ideology. With this in
mind, according to Miklós, Hungarian church politics distinguishes "between
the ideological and political goals of the Marxist Party. . . , and views
ideological goals not in themselves, but in [their] relation to political
ones." It is not because of toleration or liberalism, i.e., because of this or
that principle, that the political leadership creates harmony between
ideological and political goals, but as the result of a continual trial of
strength, i.e., in accordance with the developments at any given time in the
relations between local church and state, or party, representatives, or
between the pastor and the council chairman or party secretary. The situation concerning religious freedom is thus quite different throughout the country; it is different in practically every city, every village. In this way, there can develop on the local scene a church political climate completely different from that on a national level, which can prove either advantageous, or disadvantageous, for the church.

On the local level, therefore, actual religious freedom is dependent to a great extent upon personal relations, whereas on the national level it is political usefulness that is decisive, in line with the pragmatic application of the paroles: "This against that," and I give—I take." Though Miklós stresses that state and church are equal partners, in reality Hungary's church leaders (the partners in the church-state dialogue) find themselves in a relationship of dependence, in a position of constraint. In such a situation, which calls for dynamic forcefulness, it remains a disadvantage for the church that it has still not accustomed itself to radicalism, to living together with the stronger and more powerful. The church still places too much hope in achieving "concessions" from the state as a result of negotiations.

Were it not to go beyond the framework of this study, it would be important to mention one more aspect in connection with the above situation: one of the most important principles contained in the Hungarian constitution should actually function as a guarantee of complete religious freedom, since it states that "every disadvantageous distinction among citizens according to sex, (religious) confession, or nationality is liable to strict legal prosecution." This is the very problem faced by "second class citizens," a category into which persons of religious conviction fall, a situation referred to many times by Hungary's bishops.

Possibilities for the Development of Future Church-State Relations

Secretary of State Miklós mentioned that the relations between church and state are regulated by the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Hungary and by agreements reached between church and state. The latter lay down the principles and limitations which have gradually developed in church-state relations. According to Miklós, the agreement reached in 1948 and 1950 show, "on the one hand, the result of the battle (which was waged by the Communists in their attempt to come into power) and, on the other, created a guarantee
that between the churches, which now no longer functioned as protectors of past social conditions, and the socialist state there would develop a correct, loyal, and increasingly improved state of relations, and this in accordance with the guidelines called for by the development of the new social order."

The Constitution, the agreement, and the laws together constitute the basis for the "situation which has historically developed" between church and state. In an assessment of their results, Secretary of State Miklós comes to the conclusion that "we can be satisfied with the results achieved up to now in the relations of the churches to the socialist state. We realize of course that what we have developed together is in no way perfect or complete. We cannot stop with what has been achieved up to now." Despite the results already achieved, Miklós continued, the relationship between church and state remains a dynamic one, since there are definitely realities which have not been properly taken into consideration by existing regulations. The Hungarian government is willing to negotiate on these matters. Life too sometimes brings about unexpected changes which the government is also willing to accept and examine. Should such an examination show that a genuine religious need is involved, this must not be suppressed through administrative measures.

"Our national and international church politics have by and large worked out well. . . .," Miklós observed. "Therefore we will not attempt in the future to change them in any way; we will instead continue to work at their further development." "It is thus valuable"--here Miklós creates a new perspective for the future--"if we direct attention to the existing national and international tasks directly confronting us, and develop goals which. . . . may perhaps seem modest or even inadequate, but which nevertheless constitute a consistent step forwards."

There are still far too many matters in Hungary in the relations between church and state which were dictated through force, or were contained in a secret protocol as a pro forma transition state. This makes it impossible to describe the present "historically evolved situation" as sound and, above all, just. Even the church-state agreements came about as a result of state pressure. Preventive measures forcefully imposed by the state during the Stalin era as a part of administrative encroachments (which were also admitted to by Secretary of State Miklos), such as the deportation of members of religious orders, preceded the 1950 agreement and placed the Church in a
hopelessly disadvantageous position from the very start. This fact is specifically referred to in a pastoral letter of the Bishops Conference at the time the agreement came about. The questions involving religious orders and the members of such orders still remain unsolved today.

There is a long way to go before the relations between the Catholic Church and State can be referred to as "ordered." The Hungarian state insisted in its dealings with the Vatican that in accordance with the partial agreement reached in 1964 matters of personnel should be clarified first, i.e., that the vacant episcopal seats should be filled by such persons as were acceptable both to the Holy See and the Hungarian government. Only after the installation of such Church leaders should one proceed to a regulation of pastoral matters. The first demand was met with the appointment of Dr. László Lekai as Archbishop of Esztergom in 1976. The question of pastoral matters is still waiting to be taken up, which is reason to be concerned that by the time such a definitive "ordering" of matters in this area comes about, the most important prerequisite for an up-to-date form of pastoral care will be missing, namely a sufficient number of priests young enough for priestly work, and this because of the rapid aging of and decreasing number of the Hungarian clergy.

The existence of basic problems in the relations between church and state is symbolized, for example, by the fact that in contrast to the praxis in the area of politics, those persons who were found guilty in church political trials of the past have still today not been rehabilitated. There are thus still, for example, a great number of victims of the regulation stipulating that the years of work put in by these persons before their imprisonment do not count in the computation of retirement benefits. Many of those formerly found guilty are also affected by regulations imposing travel restrictions. Everything having to do with the church is still today a part of police files, and the data contained therein can be used at any time as a basis for legal proceedings.

It is thus quite difficult to state that the present situation in church-state relations is a result of "historical development." This situation was in no way a result of an internal logic or a historical development but stems rather from the historical state of affairs wherein those responsible for present guidelines and for developing and carrying out the church politics
of the Hungarian state are for the most part the very same persons who earlier ordered or carried out the repressive legal and administrative measures and the entire plan of church persecution. These civil servants are still interested, under the present church political situation, in seeing an acknowledgement of the results of their almost 30-year period of activity. Efforts are made by them to justify past mistakes, and they are opposed to compensation for damage caused in the past since this would be equivalent to an admission of such mistakes.

In December 1956 the government, which was interested in a consolidation of the political and economic forces after the Hungarian uprising, abolished the State Office for Church Affairs and transferred its jurisdiction, in accordance with the traditional division of governmental departments, to the Ministry of Education. Evidently the government too found it questionable that in a time of political crisis an institution should exist whose sole concern was that of church politics. In June 1959, however, the above institution was re-established with essentially the same structure and only insignificant personnel changes.

In the documentation delivered in Vienna, Secretary of State Miklós expressed the hope that the "historically evolved situation" between church and state will also be accepted by those church leaders who for the time being are still aiming for "unrealistic goals." When in connection with this he makes mention of Pope John Paul II as a concrete example of such a person, he is probably referring to the letter sent by the Pope to Hungary's bishops on December 2, 1978, in which, among other things, he expressed his conviction that Hungary's Catholic Church "would continue to form [conformare] the country's mental life." The problem seen here by Secretary of State Miklós probably has to do with the interpretation of the word conformare: "to form alone," "to participate in the formation (of something)," or "to help form."

At the same time, Miklós does not view the "historically evolved situation" as completed. On the contrary, he places equal emphasis upon the possibility of changes in the existing situation, i.e., in the present status. All such changes, however, must come about on the basis of "given realities." The justified religious demands of the faithful, Miklós stressed, will always be taken into consideration. Proof of such justification, however, must be furnished by the church. He mentions too that changes can only come about "in
small steps." Large changes or transformations which occur too rapidly will not be approved by the State, since such demands are "highly strung emotional illusions [and] nostalgic demonstrations" which in the long run can only prove harmful. A reform "in small steps," an undertaking which would be hampered by constant state studies of the matter, could, however, result in a situation, as mentioned above, wherein **modus vivendi** regarding the present state of pastoral care might, due to the rapid depletion in the ranks of the clergy, easily develop into a **modus moriendi** in that area. Such a procedure in small steps could only hold out hope of success if these small steps were all-planned and proceeded, even as far as details were concerned, on the basis of a carefully developed pastoral plan. This, however, would in turn require reliable statistical surveys and analyses of the present situation, an undertaking for which the State Office for Church Affairs has to date not given its permission. Cardinal Lékai, who is himself of the opinion that a renewal can only come about in small steps, clearly stated on the occasion of his enthronement as Archbishop of Esztergom in February 1976 that a comprehensive inventory of the existing situation is necessary, though up to the present nothing at all has occurred in this area. The small steps taken by the Primate up to now offer no evidence of a larger concept. The successes achieved by him so far are primarily the result of his personal prestige and connections.

In a speech before the Polish Bishops Conference in Czestochowa on June 5, 1979, Pope John Paul II talked of the prerequisites necessary for the trustworthy development of relationships between a socialist government and the church of such a country. His statements are also applicable to the situation in Hungary. In speaking of the normalization of the relations between the socialist government and the Catholic Church in Poland, Pope John Paul II referred to the statements of his predecessors, John XXIII and Paul VI, and to the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty and stated his conviction that

... it goes without saying that a concrete application... of these principles can only be in harmony with the idea of "religious freedom" when they take into consideration the real needs of the Church which are bound up with her manifold activity. ... Genuine dialogue must respect the
[religious] convictions of the faithful. It must guarantee all rights of citizens and, in addition, the normal prerequisites required by the Church to exercise its activity as a religious community...

We realize that this dialogue cannot be easy since it takes place between diametrically opposed ideologies. [Such a dialogue] must, however, prove to be both possible and effective if it is required in the interests of the good of man and the nation.

... The clarity of principles and their practical application is a source of moral strength and in addition contributes to the process of genuine normalization.

FOOTNOTES

1 Encyclical Redemptor Hominis (Redeemer of Man), 17; point 20 of the papal speech before the United Nations.