1984

Was "The Reality" Cut Out?

Lászlo Terray

Egede Institute for Missionary Research and Study

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree

Part of the Christianity Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol5/iss6/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.
Reverend Laszlo Terray (Lutheran) was born in Miskolc, Hungary, in 1924, studied at the Lutheran Theological Faculty in Sopron, West-Hungary, and was ordained to the ministry in the Lutheran Church in Hungary in 1946. His postgraduate studies took place in Zürich, Basel and Oslo in 1948-50, and he became a pastor of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway. He worked in the Egede Institute for Missionary Research and Study (Kirkens Nødhjelp) and as parish pastor in Edøy in the diocese of Trondheim, until he became General Secretary of the Norwegian Mission to Israel in 1967. Since 1982, he has again been in the parish, this time in Råde near Oslo. Mr. Terray was a member of the Board of Kirkens Nødhjelp 1970-80, Chairman of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Council 1968-1981. In these capacities, he attended a number of international church conferences in Europe, USA and Canada. At the VIIth the General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Dar-es-Salaam, 1977, he participated as an adviser, at the VIIth General Assembly in Budapest, 1984, as a delegate of the Church of Norway, at the IVth General Assembly in Helsinki 1963 as a press representative. In 1984, he published a book about the Hungarian Lutheran Bishop Lajos Ordass, Han kunne ikke annet [He Couldn't Do Otherwise], (Luther Forlag, Oslo). He has also contributed to the Weltkirchenlexikon (1960), The Encyclopaedia of the Lutheran Church (1965), The Lutheran Churches of the World (1957), Missio Dei (Erlangen 1981), and to periodicals.

For the very first time, an international Christian confessional organization held its General Assembly in an Eastern European socialist country, in the summer 1984. The Lutheran World Federation (hereafter LWF), representing 99 member churches in 50 countries with a total membership of over 50 million, placed their world gathering in the Hungarian capital Budapest from the 22nd of July to the 5th of August, 1984.

Preparations for this world meeting lasted four years, starting with the meeting of the LWF Executive Committee in Augsburg, FRG, in August 1980, where it was decided to prefer Hungary to the other possible alternative, Papua-New Guinea.

Great expectations were raised beforehand. Federation leaders stressed that they wanted to "build bridges" between "churches living in different
social systems" and also "between the people of these countries." Lutheran Churches should be tools for reducing tension and for further understanding between nations.

Comments on the meeting after it had taken place, were more modest. He came "with low expectations to Budapest," stated General Secretary Dr. Mau in his press conference immediately after the Assembly, still in Budapest. But for him, the Assembly "stands in the sign of peace and reconciliation."

Books could be filled with all comments and reports published in the months following the Assembly, in newspapers and periodicals all over the world. A great majority of those comments were critical, partly very critical. Martin Luther, the spiritual father of all Lutherans, "was absent" in Budapest, one comment stated. There was "too little theology," another one complained. A church leader from the German Democratic Republic even stated that for the Eastern European context this Assembly meant "practically nothing. The reality was cut out." 4

Did the General Assembly have so little to do with "realities?" As a matter of fact, this was definitely not the intention of the Assembly, nor of the LWF staff. A large number of actual themes had been set up on the agenda, burning issues related to the world around us, such as "Our Responsibility for Peace and Justice," "Caring for God's Endangered Creation," "Racism in Church and Society," and "Promoting Human Rights." These and several others of altogether 13 issues were discussed in eight sessions of about 20 working groups and thereafter in a number of plenary sessions, all under the main theme of the Assembly "In Christ - Hope for the World." 5 A Hungarian newspaper, in a presentation of the coming Assembly, indicated that

---

1LWF General Secretary Dr. Carl H. Mau, Jr. in Lutheran World Information, English Edition (LWI/EE), 8/1984, February 23, p. 4.
2Lutherische Welt Information, German Edition (LWI/GE), 31/1984, August 7, p. 4.
3Collections of comments and reports are published in LWI/GE, 31/1984 through 3/1985, and in VELKD Informationen September 15, 1984 (144 pages).
this world gathering would deal with "13 issues, of which four are religious and nine secular." The tendency to deal with the "realities" of this world was so clear that one commentator even remarked that he "seldom has experienced an Assembly where so little theological discussion had taken place."^6

It was not the intention of the host church either, to cut off the Assembly participants from the "realities." On the contrary, they strove hard to give them a picture of church life and activities in the Lutheran Church of Hungary. One of the first evenings after the opening of the Assembly was set apart for a presentation of the host church through a documentary film, speeches, drama and music. Up to 700 participants of all categories, journalists, delegates, advisors and guests got an opportunity to visit congregations in 120 places all over the country on the Sunday between the two weeks the Assembly's duration.

What the Delegates did Not See

The visitation program on Sunday, July 29, was referred to by most participants afterwards as a real success, as the climax of their stay in the country. They met festive congregations assembled for their Sunday services. Most of these congregations had not received a single foreign visitor for decades, and the guests from the Assembly were met with enthusiasm.

These foreign guests had, however, little or no chance for closer contact and encounter with the pastor or other leaders of the congregation, not to mention the congregation members. Many of the local pastors were in need of interpreters in order to communicate with the foreign guests. There was an acute lack of qualified interpreters, and in addition, no chance or time was given for private conversations. The visitors were officially received by the presbytery or church council and all speeches both on behalf of the congregation and of the guests were held with the aid of interpreters. After the service, the guests had to hurry to the congregation house or to the pastor's home, in order to participate in another official reception and to be presented with the gifts that congregation members had been preparing for them for months. For the guests who visited congregations far away from Budapest

^6"Ich habe selten eine Vollversammlung erlebt, auf der so wenig theologisch argumentiert wurde." (Superintendent Gunther Krusche, according to LWT/GE 32/1984, August 10, p. 14.)
and therefore had to arrive at their destinations Saturday evening, it was not allowed to provide private lodging. All guests should be placed in 1st class hotels, and the bills paid by the congregations.

Instructions were sent out by the bishops in advance that no guests should be presented gifts worth less than 2000 Forint. (The general average earning was 4000 Forint a month.) Nor was it allowed to transport guests with a small car like a Trabant; Western cars were preferred, or, if not available, at least a Wartburg should be used. In other words, the guests were met with a unique hospitality. But they met a showcase-church.

The same could be said about the film shown at the evening of self-presentation of the Lutheran Church in Hungary in the Assembly Hall. Here the participants could see overcrowded churches, but they were not told that the pictures were taken at the rededication of the church in Bekescsaba after a thorough restoration and, another scene, in another church when a number of new pastors were ordained. They also could see youth camps at Lake Balaton, as if they were everyday events in church life, but they were not told that the number of youth camps allowed by the state at that time was only two a year. They could also see the unveiling of a statue of Martin Luther in Budapest, without being told that this statue is not situated in any open square in the Hungarian capital but is hidden in the garden of the Theological Academy. They also saw baptism of small children, but they were not told about members who left the church or cut all contact not too long ago, when it was a severe risk, for teachers and others, to let their children be baptized. Nor were they told that the number of baptisms in the Lutheran Church in Hungary dropped from 7500 in 1956 to about half as many in the course of 25 years. The question was not even raised, how, under such circumstances, the leaders of the Lutheran Church in Hungary can state that the number of Hungarian Lutherans is 430,000 (as it was 40 years ago) or even "somewhat less than half a million."

In a "book tent" outside the Assembly Hall the visitors had the opportunity to see church publications from the last decades and they were also able to buy a Hungarian Bible as a souvenir, if they wanted to. But

---

7 Evangelikus Elet, July 21, 1957.
nobody told them that when the Lutheran Church in Hungary published its new hymnbook in 1981, they thereby had used their paper quota for four years and had to renounce publishing any book or booklet for this period.9

What Delegates did Not Know

Another aspect of the Hungarian reality which remained hidden for those 1200 participants at the Assembly, was the relations between the atheistic, socialist state and the churches.

For the Protestant churches these relations are regulated by agreements signed during the Stalinist period. The Reformed Church, traditionally representing about 1/5 of the population, was the first to sign such an agreement in the summer of 1948. When they were followed by the Lutherans in December 1948, the leading bishop of the Lutheran Church, Lajos Ordass, was sitting in prison, sentenced for "foreign currency manipulations," a charge for which he was completely rehabilitated in 1956, before the Hungarian revolt.

While the Lutherans still are bound by paragraphs signed under hard pressure in 1948, the Roman Catholic Church has a better position. Their relations to the State authorities are now based on a "part-agreement" signed in 1964. This "part-agreement" not only allowed to fill vacant bishops' seats and secured other facilitations in the church-state relations, but is also codified continuing negotiations, twice a year, between representatives of the Hungarian State and the Vatican. Thus, an opening was created for the possibility of taking up unsolved issues between the two parties.10

The Lutheran Church is, then, in a much weaker position as regards relationship to the State authorities. What is still worse, the Agreement signed under hard Stalinist pressure, has been repeatedly violated by the State authorities. The Agreement had assured obligatory teaching of religion in all schools, but this was abolished already within 9 months, in September 1949. Diaconesses houses were dissolved and nearly all their institutions confiscated in 1951, in spite of the paragraph of the Agreement assuring the

9 Circular letter of the bishops to the pastors, dated March 21, 1985, p. 93.

right of the church to maintain institutions to "take care of the poor and the
destitute, the orphans and the old people, according to the command of Christ
and the creeds of the church." The diaconic institutions maintained by the
Lutheran Church today with admirable devotion and dedication have been reduced
to homes for mentally handicapped children and adults, and for old people who
have had worked in church vocations.

In 1948 all confessional schools were confiscated by the Hungarian State,
but the Agreement secured the right of the Lutheran Church to maintain two
high schools, specifically mentioning the boys school in the VII. district in
Budapest (the famous Fasor Gymnasium) and the girls school at Deak Square.
These two institutions were, however, handed over to the State "on the free
initiative of the church leadership" (this was the phrasing of such
transactions under state pressure) in 1951, and never delivered back. (In the
course of the last few years, former pupils of the Fasor Gymnasium started a
"former pupils' association", but their efforts to inspire the church
leadership to take initiatives to regain "the Fasor" have been without any
effect until now.)

The Agreement had also secured "the missionary work done in church
magazines and independent publications." Nevertheless, the large number of
church magazines, books and pamphlets were soon reduced to a few publications
a year and to one single weekly magazine of 6 pages, entitled Evangelikus Elet
(Lutheran Life). Until the beginning of the 70's, the editor of this paper
had to show up at a state office every week with the proof sheets, before he
could give the printing order. This practice was not lifted until the magazine
got an editor who seemed to be reliable enough for the state authorities to be
sure that no articles would be printed violating any interests of state or
party.

The most important cornerstone of the present church policy is the
"decree with the force of law" of March 1957, stating that all appointments to
leading church positions are subject to previous state approval. This decree
virtually abolished church autonomy and regulates all appointments to positions
of bishop, professor of theology, senior (deans) and in practice also of all
pastors in larger towns. Until such approval is obtained, "elections" (for
the only candidate) cannot be announced.

In a lecture in Finland in 1981, the Hungarian Lutheran Bishop Zoltan
Kaldy stated that he had been "elected by a large majority of the congregations." Two years later, in a West German church yearbook he stated that the bishops in the Lutheran Church in Hungary "are elected by the congregations," a statement he also repeated during the LWF Assembly. These statements are, of course, right, when taken literally. But the reality which lies behind them, is that the "election" relates to the one candidate who previously was approved by the state authorities.

To exercise full control over the leadership in all religious denominations in Hungary, there was established a "State Office of Church Affairs" (Allami Egyházugyi Hivatal, AEH) already in 1951. Apart from a short period in 1956/57, this office has had the full authority to take any step concerning church affairs. Its local offices, situated at the seats of the district administrations (of which there are some 20 in the country), have in many cases had much more to do with the local pastors than their bishops have. These bishops often only powerlessly continued what AEH bureaucrats have ordered, or they followed their measures as if they were initiated by themselves, on questions of personal matters, local church activities, travel to foreign countries or permits (or prohibitions) for certain pastors to perform religious instruction.

What Delegates did Not Read

There should have been an opportunity for the delegates to obtain insight into the inner life and troubles of Hungarian Lutherans. So one of the pastors of this church addressed an Open Letter to the Executive Committee and the President of the LWF and "all those in the LWF who feel a sense of responsibility for the Lutheran Church in Hungary." This was a serious


13"Any pastor can be elected to bishop. But the congregations wanted to choose me." Interview with Kristeligt Dagblad, Copenhagen, July 26, 1984.
attempt to give help by clarifying burning theological issues in the church. This attempt, however, was stopped by the staff of the LWF.

The sender of this Open Letter was Zoltan Doka, pastor of the Lutheran congregation at Hevizgyörk, some 50 miles east of Budapest. He is a respected theologian, author of a 400 page *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Budapest, 1976) and a writer of no less than 28 hymns in the new Hungarian Lutheran Hymnbook of 1981.

The two main points of the ten page Open Letter (printed in this issue) was the autocratic leadership of Bishop Zoltan Kaldy and his "theological terror," by which he imposes upon all pastors and church workers his "theology of diaconia." This theology which, as a matter of fact, gives the theoretical basis for full support of the government policies, has previously been discussed by the former Director of the Department of Theology of the LWF, Dr. Vilmos Vajta. It was, however, the first time that a theologian holding a pastor's position in Kaldy's own church ventured to oppose this theological system.

Zoltan Kaldy (b. 1919) was widely known already before the General Assembly of the LWF for governing his church with a hard hand. Approved by the state authorities as the only candidate for the Bishop's office after Lajos Ordass, Vice-President of the LWF, Kaldy took office as bishop of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church in Hungary in October 1958. Step by step he developed a strong hierarchic government in his church. New church laws adopted in 1968 gave the Bishop the right to remove or appoint pastors in some cases ("when the common good of the church so requires"). As a member of the Hungarian parliament and its Foreign Committee, and participating actively in the presidency of the Patriotic People's Front, in the Hungarian Peace Council, in the government-run "Hungarians' World Association" etc., he also has behind him the strength of the Party, which is controlling all these bodies.

---

He has always openly made his views known on foreign policy.\textsuperscript{15} In the guest book at the Berlin Wall he wrote in East Berlin in 1961 he wrote: "We are thankful for the peace service done here." The Soviet occupation of Afganistan was, according to him, "a defeat of capitalism."\textsuperscript{16} According to his opinion, it was thanks to the patience of the Soviet Union that no World War III has broken out in the course of the last 30 years.\textsuperscript{17}

The coming world Assembly of the LWF in Budapest was from the beginning regarded by him as an extremely important event. In a circular letter in the beginning of 1984 he threatened with "administrative measures" those pastors who might "disturb" the preparations for the Assembly. "Those, who do not listen to us, must not be surprised if the church leadership will react, not in the spirit of the Gospel, but, in accordance with Lutheran theology, with the law, against them, as soon as we get enough time to do this afterwards."\textsuperscript{18}

A year earlier, he admonished the pastors: "If during the days of the LWF Assembly pastors and congregations cause problems or difficulties for our church leadership, they will be acting against the entire Church, and even more, against Jesus Christ."\textsuperscript{19}

Kaldy was also well known for his irreconcilable attitude towards his predecessor, Lajos Ordass. Two days before the opening of the Assembly, however, he found his way to the grave of Ordass and, in the presence of members of the LWF Executive Committee and of representatives of the press, he gave a speech paying homage to Ordass and speaking of Ordass' "spiritual heritage" which he wanted to take preserve.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15}For details see: J. V. Eibner; "Zoltan Kaldy: A New Way For The Church In Socialism?" in, Religion in Communist Lands 1/1985, pp. 33-47

\textsuperscript{16}Quoted in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, August 2, 1984

\textsuperscript{17}Quoted in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, May 9, 1984


\textsuperscript{19}Quoted in Deutsches Allegemeinem Sonntagsblatt, 33/1984, August 12.

\textsuperscript{20}LWI/GE 29/1984, July 26, p. 10.
Pastor Doka, then on leave in Western Germany for studies and medical treatment, hoped that his Open Letter would be distributed to the members of the Executive Committee, to whom it was addressed. This was, however, not done. General Secretary Dr. Mau stated: "The Executive Committee has not dealt with it, because not all members have received it." But copies of the letter were brought into Hungary, and members of the press at the Assembly took notice of it. And then events began to happen rapidly.

First, the copying machine of the Assembly Press Center became available only for the LWF staff. Secondly, the Secretary for Europe of the LWF, Dr. Sam Dahlgren, composed a statement for Bishop Zoltan Kaldy against the Doka letter, and this statement was distributed, while Doka's letter was still unknown to most of the delegates and press people.

Thirdly, the Bishop of Copenhagen, Ole Bertelsen, in a plenary session requested that the letter be made available for delegates, and the General Secretary promised to take up the question in the Business Committee. The Minutes of the Business Committee, however, reveal that the question was not raised there. When, two days later, Bishop Bertelsen again raised the question in the Plenary, the answer was that it was "felt incorrect to allow persons outside the Assembly to intrude on the agenda in this way," and Dr. Mau added that the translation and duplication of Pastor Doka's letter would anyway not have been possible. Fourthly, Europe Secretary Sam Dahlgren accused one of the journalists of having taken the Open Letter with him into Hungary and threatened him with an order to leave the country.

Obviously to Kaldy, who was very much interested in becoming the new president of the LWF, the Open Letter of Pastor Doka came at a very

---

21 LWI/GE 30/1984, August 2, p. 2.

22 Minutes, Seventh LWF Assembly, pp. 120-122.

23 Printed in Minutes, Seventh LWF Assembly, pp. 120-122

24 Ibid., p. 64

25 LWI/GE 31/1984, August 7, p. 17

26 In an interview with the Danish newspaper Kristeligt Dagblad, he declared that he would regard it as discrimination, should he not be elected as president. Kristeligt Dagblad, July 26, 1984.
inconvenient time. His reaction to it was, therefore, sharp. Kaldy's answer, drafted by Dr. Dahlgren as his "ghostwriter," was carefully copied and distributed to each and all delegates by the LWF staff on the order of General Secretary Dr. Mau, without having been discussed in any body responsible for the agenda of the Assembly. In it, the Bishop described the allegations of Pastor Doka as "simply untrue" and interpreted them as expressions of Doka's personal disappointments. The statement also touches upon Doka's family situation, hinting at the "tragic situation" of one family member. At the same time, however, Kaldy also declared himself willing to discuss the problems of the "theology of diaconia" at a later date and assured that he would not do anything that would make "Pastor Doka's return to Hungary more difficult."27 Later developments showed that this statement and others of the same kind were mainly designed for the foreign visitors, giving them the impression of willingness to open up a theological discussion in the Lutheran Church in Hungary. They were not communicated to the Hungarian public, nor were they followed up.

Only a few of the delegates were informed about another statement of another Hungarian Lutheran pastor. Under normal circumstances of information and communication, this statement would certainly have attracted much attention and discussion.

This statement (printed in this issue) was made by Laszlo Csengödy, pastor of Budahegyvédik Lutheran Church, the congregation to which the late bishop Lajos Ordass belonged during the last 18 years of his life, while he was silenced and isolated in the third floor flat behind the Buda castle on the Western shore of the Danube.

In his statement, Pastor Csengödy made it clear that he, as the pastor of the congregation, had been strongly requested by the church leadership to persuade Bishop Ordass not to participate in the divine services. In the presence of foreign guests, who on that very Sunday visited congregations and churches all over the country, Csengödy also told about the drawbacks and disadvantages his congregations was exposed to just because Ordass belonged to it. But he also expressed hope that the speech of Bishop Kaldy at the grave

27Statement by Bishop Kaldy, dated July 27, 1984, distributed at a press conference in the presence of about 300 journalists the same morning.
of Ordas would put things right, and thanked the Bishop for this gesture.

At the end of the service, Csengödy's statement was distributed to those present. Although delegates and the press had no access to it, they certainly were informed by the verbal reaction of Bishop Kaldy. Csengödy was a "bad pastor" (ein schlechter Pfarrer), he stated, and members of Csengödy's congregation had already asked him (Kaldy) to remove Csengödy from his office. This claim seemed to have been weakly founded, since Csengödy does not belong to the district of Bishop Kaldy, but to that of Bishop Gyula Nagy.

What Delegates did Not Speak About

Due to skillful manoeuvring by the LWF staff, neither the letter of Zoltan Doka, nor the statement of Laszlo Csengödy reached a majority of the delegates. Discussions in the working groups and plenary meetings could continue without disturbances. The extreme cautiousness of the staff and business managers resulted also in avoiding any discussion about sensible issues that could raise uneasiness in the Hungarian hosts.

Contact with the world outside the Assembly was reduced to a minimum anyway. Watchmen in civilian clothes were guarding both entrances of the nearby Stadion Hotel, where all delegates stayed, preventing others than those wearing the official badges of the Assembly, from entering. Language difficulties made the Assembly an isolated island. The number of available sets for simultaneous translation was very limited. After the crowded opening service in the presence of some 12,000 people, the group of listeners diminished very quickly, and in the course of a few days, it was reduced to a few dozen. Most of the time the discussions took place in front of totally empty stands.

Reports from the 13 different working groups were placed before the plenary and passed as resolutions, without touching upon the specific problems of the churches in Eastern Europe. A striking example is the report from Working Group 12 dealing with "Christian Life in Different Social Systems." The Assembly resolution mentions facilitating "intercultural, intracultural, cross-ethnic, and interchurch study and exchange programs, which enable member

---

28Lutherischer Weltbund. Siebente Vollversammlung Budapest. Presse-Information Nr. 68 (without date).
churches to express their fears, their hopes and the goals of Christian living in their particular social system." It also recommends that the LWF "provide information and studies on different social systems," etc., but it does not say a word about the specific context, in which the Assembly discussions took place, i.e. the Eastern European atheistic Marxist society.

The intention was, as we have perceived it, to "build bridges" between churches and peoples, but the problems of East and West were not raised during the Assembly. The question of religious freedom, which obviously was a burning issue for a great number of participants from Eastern European countries, was not discussed. The situation of those Christian groups and churches in Eastern Europe which are hindered in practicing their mission obligation in a context unfriendly or even hostile, was not mentioned at all. In a plenary discussion one Scandinavian delegate took up the question of the church's situation in Marxist Ethiopia. In this country one of the largest and most expanding Lutheran Churches in Africa meets great difficulties in carrying out its service. But this Scandinavian delegate remained alone; his initiative was not followed up. And if one Hungarian delegate had not mentioned the question of dialogue between Christians and Marxists, even this acute issue would have remained unmentioned in the Assembly documents.

This excessive cautiousness of those controlling the agenda of the Assembly seemed to be exaggerated in the one country in Eastern Europe which shows most of openness and readiness to open channels for better communication with the Western world. It contributed to making the Assembly an island and to neglect its context. "The conditions in Hungary are taboo in Budapest," reported a West German journalist to his newspaper.29

What Delegates did Not Learn After They Left

When the Assembly closed on the 5th of August, the writer of the Open Letter, Pastor Zoltan Doka, was still in Western Germany. His wife was given the advice by a representative of Bishop Kaldy that it was better for him to remain abroad. But Doka returned to Hungary later in August, and was immediately suspended from his service in the congregation of Hevizgyőr. This was first done over telephone by dean Lászlo Kevehazi, and then, in the

29Hamburger Abendblatt, July 26, 1984.
absence of both the Bishop and the Vice-Bishop, but allegedly in their name, by acting Bishop Mihaly Toth-Szollos, in writing.

About the same time, Evangelikus Elet printed a long article with crass attacks on Doka. A few weeks later, a similar article appeared, signed by Bishop Kaldy, mentioning "a traitorous liar of a pastor." An answer written by Doka was refused printing in Evangelikus Elet. Pastors' meetings were arranged with the badly hidden purpose to arrange condemnation of Doka by his colleagues, thus creating a platform for isolating him in the church. When Doka himself showed up at a meeting in his district, he was denied the right to speak.

The foreign press, church and secular alike, brought news and comments of indignation from church leaders who reminded of the promise made by Kaldy during the Assembly that he was willing to engage in dialogue concerning all issues, including the "theology of diaconia" with Doka and others. "Immediately after the election the Bishop settles with his pastor," the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung wrote in a two column long article. The Bishops' Conference of the Lutheran Church in Western Germany informed Bishop Gyula Nagy, who attended as a visitor "how disastrous an impression the suspension of Pastor Doka made on German Lutherans," the same paper reported a few weeks later. The Evangelischer Pressedienst in Frankfurt published a special issue in their series of Dokumentation, collecting documents concerning the Doka affair on 38 pages. But nothing about the "Doka affair" was even mentioned in the press service of the Lutheran World Federation. Answering to a direct question from Evangelischer Pressedienst, General Secretary Dr. Mau declared that it was his impression that Pastor Doka has

35 No 47a/1984, of November 4, 1984.
received "a fair treatment from all those involved." To a question from the Oslo newspaper Vart Land, Europe Secretary of the LWF Sam Dahlgren even asserted that representatives of the Federation "had followed the developments very "carefully and encouraged both parties to reconciliation." This statement proved to be incorrect, as Pastor Doka himself revealed that not one single person from the Lutheran World Federation had been in contact with him, neither at the time when the interview for Vart Land was given, nor at any later time at least up to a year after the Assembly closed.

When Bishop Kaldy finally had to yield to the enormous international pressure and gave an order to lift the suspension, Doka had been in full pastoral service all the time, with full support of his congregation and of a large number of his colleagues. In the meantime, Bishop Kaldy surprisingly wanted to catch his pastors off guard and, after a secret conference with the seniors, ordered that votes be taken in all 16 seniorates of the Lutheran Church condemning the action and the Open Letter of Zoltan Doka, which had not been distributed in the church before or after this vote was taken. A large majority of the pastors not only declined to condemn Doka, but they even gave a negative answer to another question laid before them by the seniors on whether they had confidence in the church leadership. This stood in sharp contrast to statements of Kaldy made during the Assembly, that 85% of the 280 pastors of the Lutheran Church in Hungary supported his "theology of diaconia" and, should Doka return to Hungary, 250 pastors would leave their posts in protest, because they would see it impossible to cooperate with Doka.

Those delegates who do not read the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and other European newspapers (namely a majority of them) but get their information concerning Lutheran churches by means of the press service of the LWF, had no chance at all to be acquainted with the proceedings of the "Doka affair", until the Federation suddenly published that the suspension (which had not

---

37 October 30, 1984.
39 LWF/GE 31/1984, August 7, p. 17
been mentioned earlier) was lifted at the end of October 1984. 40

Even After the Assembly, The "Reality" was Cut Out.

Did nothing good come out of this Assembly? Surely something did. Many of the resolutions, and also the discussions, may have some lasting effect on member churches and on participants in Budapest. Plans for the establishment of a special office to work on questions of human rights, a strong basic statement on peace, a resolution stressing the right to do alternative service to military service (conscientious objectors), the demand to separate pre-military education from compulsory civilian education, the decision to strengthen the quota of women in LWF committees and coming assemblies -- all these resolutions can prove to be of great importance in the life of Lutheran churches.

In many respects, the host church also profited much by this gathering of Lutherans from all over the world. It gave an opportunity for Christians in Hungary to appear publicly in their country. While the Assembly was held in the Sports Hall, a large transparent banner outside revealed what kind of congress was going on: "Seventh Lutheran World Meeting." For the first time in many years, a divine service was broadcast live on the Hungarian State radio, and a shortened version of the opening service later the same day also on the Hungarian television. Short reports on the deliberations were also reported in the evening news for several days. Even the Hungarian State Airlines, MALEV, marked the special event of the Assembly by delivering to each participant a practical bag, with the emblem and motto of the Assembly printed on it: "In Christ - Hope for the World." And all this in a communist country!

As to the inner life of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, however, there is still a considerable catching up to be done. The free theological discussion

40A first version of the decision of the church court lifting the suspension, dated Oct. 25 and published by the Geneva office of the LWF (epd Dokumentation 47a, p.32, cfr. Note 35 above) indicated that Doka was "not in a psychical state to be able to take in the whole situation unbiased and consider his own behavior calmly. For this he needs time to be given." Noting the reactions to this unique insinuation, Kaldy personally changed the text of the court decision on his own, and the passage was omitted in the second version published by the LWF, in LWI/EE 43/1984, November 1, p. 3.
promised by Bishop Kaldy during the Assembly still has not begun. To be sure, an "Academic Theological Society" has been founded "to establish a forum for the wide theological discussion." The bishops and professors, the LWF Information Service reports, "had agreed to this during the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation." But members of this society will, of course, be picked out by the church leadership, and then, the outcome is guaranteed. The speech of Bishop Kaldy held at the grave of Bishop Ordass still has not been published in Hungarian, and the name of Ordass continues to be hidden in deep silence by the Lutheran press in Hungary. Are the promises made during the Assembly statements made only for the foreign press? Or will the LWF have the courage and ability to help those promises to be kept?

41 LWI/EE, Monthly edition, June 1985, p. 9