Kaldy Denies Charges in Doka Letter

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BUDAPEST, July 27 (lwi) -- Bishop Zoltan Kaldy, president of the Lutheran Church in Hungary and a candidate for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) presidency, said at a press briefing today that allegations made against him by Hungarian pastor Zoltan Doka in an open letter to LWF officials and others before the Assembly were "simply untrue." He said he thought the allegations came as a result of Doka's "personal disappointments" at not being selected by the church for a New Testament theology teaching position at the Lutheran theological faculty.

Doka, presently living in West Germany, had charged that Kaldy controls theological thought in the church (which puts a strong emphasis on the theology of diaconia or service) and that he intimidates dissenting pastors.

The Hungarian bishop, answering questions from reporters, said he thought Doka had written the letter to lessen his chances of assuming the LWF presidency. He questioned whether a "free election" could take place when candidates who came from socialist countries were "attacked" from the West. Similar attacks "are never made on Western or Third World candidates," he continued.

Kaldy, who said he "appreciated" Doka's theological work, which includes a commentary on the Gospel of Mark, claimed in an opening statement that Doka's "family situation" made the affair "much more complex" and said that a "tragic situation" might develop. Although Doka is engaged in theological research in West Germany, his wife, an assistant pastor, has remained in Hungary, and a daughter has "apparently" sought to stay permanently in Sweden following a scholarship program, Kaldy explained. The bishop said he was sorry that he was "compelled" to make Doka's family life public because of the interest in the letter.

Kaldy said that it would be "helpful" and was "necessary" to discuss the theology of diaconia, which also came in for attack in Doka's letter. But, he said, the present is "not the best time for such a discussion," because of the limited church resources that have this past year been stretched preparing for
the LWF Assembly. He said that he thought only 10 or 15 percent of his pastors could not accept the theology of diaconia. "But they are good pastors. I like them and I honor them," he assured reporters.