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STATEMENT BY BISHOP KALDY

Budapest, July 27, 1984

I am happy to have this opportunity to meet representatives of the press today. I assume that many of you have a special interest in the open letter which Pastor Zolta Doka sent recently to the leadership of the LWF. Let me open this session with a few comments on this issue. I have the impression that this letter has aroused much interest among the journalists who have come to Budapest to follow the proceedings of the LWF Assembly.

The letter, which most of you probably have already seen, is partly an attack against the theology of diaconia which many of my colleagues and I have tried to develop in the past years, and partly against me personally. It would, of course, be helpful - even necessary - to discuss the theology of diaconia which has drawn interest here. It is my view, however, that this is not the best moment for such a discussion. During the recent years, and especially during this last one, our church has been deeply involved in the preparation of the VIIth Assembly of the LWF. Our capacity has not been sufficient for carrying on a profound enough discussion of the theological issues which deserve attention. Ours is a small church, and an assembly of these dimensions has claimed all of our time and energy. I hope that at a later date it will be possible to reassume discussion on all the problems which have come up recently concerning the theology of diaconia. I have no illusions that the position which I and many of my co-workers in the church represent would be infallible.

In regard to Pastor Doka's personal attack against me in his letter, I must confess that I am very disappointed.

Pastor Doka is a biblical scholar presently in the Federal Republic of Germany in order to continue theological research. He has been working on a new commentary on the Acts for several years. For this reason he has spent considerable time in West Europe on several occasions. I myself have appreciated the work which he has done in cooperation with our theological faculty and which could make a contribution to our theological research. Pastor Doka's family situation makes this matter much more complex, since his

daughter received a LWF scholarship last year for theological studies in Sweden. Her stay abroad has lasted ten months, and she has apparently decided to leave her home country permanently and stay in Sweden. Mrs. Doka is a pastor here in Hungary and has worked as an assistant pastor in the congregation of Pastor Doka. They have another daughter who lives here in Budapest. In this connection a rather tragic situation is evolving, not just for the Hungarian Church and for his congregation, but for the whole family.

There is another element which needs to be taken into account in this case, and which can further explain Pastor Doka's action. Last year there was a vacancy in our theological faculty of the chair on New Testament Theology. We had two candidates for this position. One of them was Pastor Doka. His competitor, Dr. Sandor Csernati, had earned a doctor's degree which Pastor Doka had not done, and therefore was deemed the more qualified of the two.

As you might realize, the picture is far more complex than what he conveys in his letter. I am sorry that I have to make all this public. I have been compelled to do so because there has been such an interest in Pastor Doka's letter and because its content has already been published in a summary form in the press which is represented here.

It is my interest and the interest of the church to do nothing which would make Pastor Doka's return to Hungary more difficult, in case he would like to return.

I want to add that Pastor Doka was offered a pastorate in our main church in Budapest, Deak ter, but he turned down this offer.

Concerning Pastor Doka's allegations against me, I have no desire to comment on them. These allegations are simply untrue. I am inclined to interpret them as expressions of his personal disappointments.

Finally, I trust in your understanding and good will in this delicate matter.

Thank you.

Dear Brothers:

On this occasion, in the presence of our foreign guests and with the greatest respect towards our church leaders, I would like to read out to our congregation from this newspaper, Day by Day, No.1. - the organ of the General Assembly of the LWF - parts of Bishop Kaldy's speech which he made remembering Bishop Lajos Ordass in front of his grave a few days ago in the presence of chief members of the General Assembly.

Bishop Lajos Ordass sat here, in this church, always in the same place in the last chair near the window. This everybody could see and everybody knew this. He sat there after having lived in total privacy for some years and I personally called him to come and be among us. There he sat for 16 years, until his death. He came and remained. We were glad to have him among us. But we suffered because of him. Today these two facts must be mentioned together. It was because of him that we were considered to be a "reactionary" congregation -- as a rumor was going around -- which, under the influence of Bishop Ordass, opposed the church leaders. Because of him, because of his personality the church leaders did not care to solve the unsolved problems of our congregation. Because of him, because of being his friend, pastor Elemer Ruttkay was convicted politically without his circumstances having been examined, not because of his way of behaving. I personally was considered to be his relative and his secret informer and this fact lay on me as a heavy burden. Our church leaders tried to induce me twice to ask Bishop Ordass tactfully not to take part in the services and that I should hinder the members of the congregation in meeting him and in speaking to him. And our higher leaders did not like us to have any contact with Bishop Ordass.

I do not want to go on enumerating the grievances and the distress of the soul. But I want our guests to know why Bishop Kaldy's commemorating speech made at the grave of Bishop Ordass is so important for us. It is important from the point of view of our congregation. After Bishop Ordass's rehabilitation, in the autumn of 1956, it was in this church that he preached his first sermon; I was one of the last whom Bishop Ordass, before having been arrested, ordained clergyman in 1947; and it was the clergyman of this congregation who held the service at his burial. It always was of concern to us and the matter still affects us as to what happened to Bishop Ordass and how he will be judged after his death.

Bishop Dr. Zoltan Kaldy's words at the grave [see Naprol napra July 22, 1984, page 3.] prompted us to say to Bishop Zoltan Kaldy "Thank you!" I could not say anything else of Bishop Ordass now than what I said at the burial at his bier.

Congregational and personal events show how close and inherent the past was connected with Bishop Ordass's existence. The earlier unrighteous attitude of the leading members of our church ruined people of the church and deprived them of their rights and prevented the unfolding of their ability. These facts affected not only Bishop Ordass's family but also his friends and his congregation as well. A speech made at the grave can never be compensated by money or by other means for that which has been taken away. We can only hope that the harmful attitude of the misuse of authority will serve a lesson to all of us.

Let us live in that hope.

But all this could have been avoided if this [Bishop Kaldy's] speech had been made earlier. But it was made finally, and let us hope that the misjudgment and the malicious attitude towards our congregation will gradually fade away. Though it cannot vanish totally from our memory, let the feeling of forgiveness be strengthened in us towards all those who have trespassed against us.

I have only told the truth, now, as always when I spoke in this church. Truth must be spoken out sometimes in order to be able to get rid of the burden of injustice.

Please perceive the meaning of what was said in the above mentioned manner.

Let Bishop Ordass's life and faithfulness be our example.

God Bless and preserve him - also after his death.

Budapest, Budahegyvidek, July 29, 1984.

Laszlo Csengödy