Two Open Letters from Hungary

David Baer
Texas Lutheran University
TWO OPEN LETTERS FROM HUNGARY
by David Baer

Dr. H. David Baer is Associate Professor of Theology & Philosophy and chair of the department at Texas Lutheran University. He is the author of *The Struggle of Hungarian Lutherans under Communism*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006. For many years he was book review editor of *REE*. His personal links to Hungary are detailed below.

Anyone paying attention to the Greek debt crisis knows the European Union is under stress. Less well known, but possibly more troubling, has been Hungary’s sudden turn toward authoritarianism. This political transformation has been orchestrated by the party of Hungary’s conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. In elections held in 2010, Orbán’s party, FIDESZ, won 53% of the popular vote. Because of rules regarding disproportionate parliamentary representation, that 53% majority translated into 68% of the seats in Hungary’s unicameral Parliament. With this supermajority FIDESZ has been able to rewrite the country’s constitution and other fundamental (or cardinal) laws, although its intention to carry out such radical changes was not announced during the electoral campaign. Over a span of about six months in 2011, Hungary’s parliament passed over 300 laws and put into a place an entirely new constitutional regime. Among the changes are a new electoral law that critics say will make it very difficult to dislodge FIDESZ in future elections; laws which undermine the independence of Hungary’s central bank; laws that undermine the independence of the state ombudsman; the establishment of a “media council” with the power to impose fines on press outlets that do not maintain “balance” in their reporting; a law on religion that reduced the number of recognized churches from approximately 360 to 32; and the establishment a National Judiciary Office under the charge of a single person with a nine year renewable term, who is singly authorized to appoint new judges, evaluate existing judges, and to decide the circuit in which individual court cases will be heard.¹

Hungary’s new constitutional regime has become the object of intense international scrutiny and criticism. Hungarian is currently requesting a loan from the IMF, but the IMF is unwilling to negotiate a loan until after the government modifies a number of laws affecting the independence of the central bank. Hungary was also visited in February 2012 by a delegation representing the Venice Commission, a legal advisory body for the Council of Europe. A month later the commission released two separate opinions concerning Hungary’s judiciary laws and its law on religion. According to one of the reports, “The visit of the delegation of the Commission showed that the cardinal laws were adopted in a speedy manner that did not include an adequate consultation of the opposition and civil society. The adoption of a large amount of legislation in a very short period of time could explain why some issues in the cardinal laws examined in the present Opinion do not meet European standards.”²

Hungary’s new law “on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on the Legal Status of Churches, Religious Denominations and Religious Communities” contains numerous provisions that are troublesome from the standpoint of religious freedom. The law was originally passed in July 2011, but by means of irregular parliamentary maneuvers. An initial bill was


brought to the floor by a representative of the Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP), a
coalition party in the ruling government. Two hours before the final vote, however, a member of
FIDESZ proposed an “amendment” from the floor that changed the bill in its essentials, and it was
this amended bill that passed. In December 2011, Hungary’s Constitutional Court struck the law
down on the basis of a narrow ruling. According to the Court, the parliamentary procedures by
which the bill was passed were unconstitutional. The narrow basis of this ruling, however, allowed
the government to introduce a second version of the bill with only minor modifications. Thus
Parliament passed a nearly identical version of the religion law on December 30, 2011, this time
without procedural irregularities.

The new law on religion went into effect on January 1, 2012. It distinguishes between
recognized “churches” and “religious communities.” Previously, there had been approximately
360 registered churches in Hungary. The new law recognized only 14 churches, all of which were
either Christian or Jewish. In March 2012, perhaps in response to international criticism, the
religion law was modified to include Muslims, Buddhists, and a few small Christian groups such
as the Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and Methodists. There are now, at the time of
this writing, 32 recognized churches in Hungary. Those churches previously recognized before
passage of the new law, but not included on that list of 32, have been stripped of their recognized
status.

Recognized churches receive numerous privileges, which include, but are not limited to,
state financial support. According to the law, educational activities and charity work, for example,
are not recognized as having an inherently religious character even when carried out by religious
associations. Thus an unrecognized religious community wishing to perform these kinds of
activities must register and request permission to do so as “civil association.” What this will mean
in practice, however, is not yet clear, since numerous deregistered churches are only now in the
process of applying for recognition as civil associations.

Moreover, the procedure by which a religious community may gain legal recognition as
a church is highly arbitrary. For example, the law imposes a duration requirement of “at least 100
years internationally or in an organised manner as an association in Hungary for at least 20 years,”
a requirement which the Venice Commission views as excessive.\(^3\) Furthermore, legal recognition
to a “church” is granted by a two-thirds vote in Parliament, which is not required to provide
reasons for rejecting an application. Parliament’s decision cannot be reviewed by the courts
(although there is a possibility, as yet uncertain, that the Constitutional Court may decide that it
can rule on such decisions). In the view of the Venice Commission:

> the recognition or de-recognition of a religious community (organization) remains
fully in the hands of Parliament, which inevitably tends to be more or less based
on political considerations. Not only because Parliament as such is hardly able to
perform detailed studies related to the interpretation of the definitions contained
in the Act, but also because this procedure does not offer sufficient guarantees for
a neutral and impartial application of the Act... It is obvious from the first
implementation of the Act, that the criteria that have been used are unclear, and
moreover that the procedure is absolutely not transparent. Motives of the
decisions of the Hungarian Parliament are not public and not grounded. The
recognition is taken by a Parliamentary Committee in the form of a law (in case of
a positive decision) or a resolution (in case of a negative decision). This cannot be

\(^3\) Opinion 664/2012 European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), page 9, paragraph 57,
and page 10, paragraph 64.
viewed as complying with the standards of due process of law. The law also includes a vague provision that allows the government to restrict religious freedom in cases where religious activities pose a threat to national security or to the constitution. And the law contains other problematic provisions.

The highly arbitrary basis for such a significant legal distinction as that between churches and religious communities led the Venice Commission to conclude as follows:

the Venice Commission considers not only the unequal treatment of 32 churches on the one hand and the other religions on the other hand, worrying, but also the conditions these other religions have to comply with in order to acquire to the status of Churches. Moreover, the Venice Commission questions whether the restricted status afforded to “religious organizations” (as compared to “churches”) may be discriminatory, and could even render their enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion illusory and theoretical, rather than practical and effective.

As of this writing, the Hungarian government has not responded to the Venice Commission's assessment of the religion law in any substantial way. Shortly after the report was released, a member of the Christian Democratic People’s Party and the chair of the parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minority, Civic and Religious Affairs, Tamás Lukács, stated in a radio interview that the Venice Commission’s report was full of “logical contradictions.”

Despite such restrictions on religious freedom, much of the Orbán government’s political support comes from Hungary’s historically established churches, particularly from the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches. Orbán’s government purports to represent Christian values. In this spirit the new constitution recognizes that life begins at conception and that marriage is between a man and woman. The government also talks openly of “Christian” and “national” values, and it clearly intends to cooperate with Hungary’s historical churches in shaping the public sphere. At the same time, the new constitutional regime violates basic principles of constitutionalism and the rule of law that one might consider central to the Christian political tradition.

As a scholar of religion in Eastern Europe with extensive experience in, and personal connections to Hungary, I myself have been distressed by Hungarian developments, and I have even become a minor participant in events. In January 2012, I wrote an “Open Letter to my friends in the Hungarian churches, and to all those who have supported Viktor Orbán.” The Hungarian government likes to portray the international criticism it has received as rooted in a secular liberalism that is antagonistic to the resurgence of conservative Christian values in Europe. The purpose of my open letter was to let Hungarian Christians know that not only secular liberals are critical of the Orbán government. In fact, there are good reasons for Christians to be worried about what is happening in Hungary. My letter was posted on evangelikus.hu, an online newspaper belonging to the Lutheran Church in Hungary.

In February 2012, the Catholic Archbishop of Veszprém, Gyula Márfi, addressed an open letter of his own to me, in which he attempted to respond to my concerns and criticisms. Archbishop Márfi’s letter, which one might call strident in tone, generated something of a public scandal. Within days after Márfi’s letter became public, Ferenc Gyurcsány, a former Hungarian

4 Opinion 664/2012 European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), page 12, paragraphs 76-77.
6 For Hungarian speakers, the radio interview is available at this link http://mno.hu/belfold/tevedesekkel-van-tele-a-velencei-bizottsag-jelentese-hang:1061515
prime minister, responded with his own open letter. Shortly after that, Zsolt Semjén, leader of the
Christian Democratic People’s Party and a Deputy Minister in the government, wrote a public letter
addressed to me defending the positions articulated by Archbishop Márfi. Additional politicians
chimed in. The public debate was reported on in all the national media outlets. Archbishop Márfi
was even paid a visit by the Israeli Ambassador to Hungary (readers of his letter will be able to
understand why).

English translations of my letter and Archbishop Márfi’s are included below. That my
modest open letter could generate such a large scale controversy is perhaps symptomatic of the fact
that something in Hungary has gone terribly wrong.

An open letter from the West to my friends in the Hungarian Churches, and to all those who
have supported Viktor Orbán. (Jan. 2012)

Dear Friends!

I write from the West, where I have been following Hungarian events with concern. The
western press has been covering Hungary in detail, and the Orbán government has become the
object of universally sharp criticism. These criticisms are painful for me. Over the past twenty
years I have spent many years in Hungary as a theologian. Twice I was in Hungary through a
Fulbright fellowship – on the first occasion I conducted research at the Evangelical-Lutheran School
of Theology; the second time I taught at the Gáspár Károli Reformed University. I also wrote a book
on the Lutheran Church in Hungary under communism. My wife and children are Hungarian
citizens. I sincerely wish that I could respond to the criticism leveled against Hungary in the West
and defend Hungary’s reputation, but unfortunately, that is something I cannot do. The Orbán
government has transgressed by far the limits of what in the West is considered acceptable politics.

I have always followed the political situation in Hungary with interest, and although I have
never taken a public position until now, of course I always had opinions. Since I deal with
churches and my Hungarian friends are mostly people from the churches, I felt solidarity with
those who wanted to lead the country out of its communist past and to create a new beginning. I
sympathized, therefore, with the political right, as did many others in the West. I remember well
how enthusiastic American political scientists were about Viktor Orbán in the nineties and how
much they were rooting for him. When Fidesz won the elections for the first time, I was happy that
a party had formed to act as a counterbalance to MSZP, and when Fidesz came into power a second
time, after an MSZP government that lasted too long and was riddled with mistakes, I hoped that
the country would regain its equilibrium. But despite my hopes, I watched the Orbán government
first with surprise, then disillusionment, and finally in shock.

The fall of communism presented Hungary with the opportunity to finally integrate with
the West. It was a moment of historic significance. From the time that Saint Stephen chose Roman
Christianity, Hungary has always looked to the West. Although this western orientation was
threatened repeatedly, from the Turkish conquest to Soviet imposed communism, Hungarians
always maintained a Western mind-set and struggled to belong to the community of Western
countries. After many long, painful centuries this great historical ambition finally led in the last
twenty years to visible success – or so it seemed. Hungary’s political system became open and
democratic, and both NATO and the EU accepted Hungary into its membership. True, integration
with the West would only be complete if Hungary freed itself from the negative social effects of
communism. Yet, although the country has not been able fully to accomplish this task, doing away
with the remnants of communism has always been one of the goals of western integration. The
current Orbán government, however, is attempting to do away with the communist past by abandoning the West.

I understand that Orbán doesn’t explain his government’s policies this way; rather he describes them as the defense of national interest. He argues that Hungary is a sovereign state which has not only the right, but also an interest in traveling its own path. This is an understandable and attractive argument, support for which can be found in the idea of a so called “third way,” an idea which has cropped up many times in Central Europe. “The third way” – according to the conception – leads neither East nor West, but is national and unique. In communism, too, the idea of a third way became popular in certain circles, because it inspired the hope that it was possible to create a kind of social system that followed neither the Soviet model nor the model of free market capitalism. This is a nice dream, but it has very little connection with reality. One needs to see clearly that just as in the past, so also today, the “third way” travels East.

From a Christian perspective, the Basic Law on freedom of conscience and religion is particularly troubling. Freedom of conscience is fundamental to the Christian faith; as Luther said, “it is neither safe nor right to act against one’s conscience.” Freedom of religion follows from freedom of conscience, since the human being responds to truth and the call of God with a free conscience. The unshakeable Christian commitment to religious freedom has been expressed best by the Roman Catholic Church in the declaration of the Second Vatican Council titled Dignitatis Humanae. The official Catholic teaching reads as follows:

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons-that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility-that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.

Religious freedom requires social freedom as well, since people exercising freedom of conscience must act in communities. As the Catholic declaration continues:

The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself. Provided the just demands of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and promote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their own lives in accordance with their religious principles.

How am I to reconcile this official Christian teaching with a Basic Law that makes unequal legal distinctions between churches and religious communities? With a Basic Law according to
which legal recognition of a church requires that a religious community has functioned in Hungary for at least twenty years, when the right to religious freedom rests on human dignity and not on the passage of time? How is it that recognition as a church depends upon a two-thirds vote by the Parliament and not on the legal interpretation of the courts, when religious freedom is not a political, but legal question? We Christians don’t interpret religious freedom this way! How should I explain to my Christian friends in the West that their churches, for example, the Methodist or Anglican, don’t count as churches in Hungary, although they are recognized as churches internationally and are even members of the World Council of Churches? I simply do not understand how the Basic Law’s unequal handling of religious freedom can follow from those Christian values which the new Hungarian state professes in its constitution. Is it not possible that the new Hungarian state has derived this unequal treatment not from Christianity, but from the practices of the Horthy era?

Maybe a Basic Law restricting religious freedom is considered a mere peccadillo in Hungary, but in the West it counts as a big sin. One might think of the new Hungarian constitution as the foundation of a distinctive Hungarian democracy, but one needs to be clear that this distinctive Hungarian democracy contradicts the basic rules of western democracy. The centralization of power in the Parliament in a way that undermines the independence of state institutions, the large number of basic laws requiring a two thirds majority vote, the restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of religion – these are all incompatible with the western interpretation of democracy. In this respect the West is unanimous; the press on both the left and the right – be it Austrian, English, German, French or American – expresses the same opinion. In the West this new kind of distinctive democracy is called “Putinism.”

Up to now there’s not been an example of a country voluntarily leaving the community of democratic countries. European integration is an old dream, the ideals of which can be traced back at least to Rousseau. European integration solves the largest problem afflicting the whole of European history, namely, the problem of war. A peaceful and democratic Europe grants the citizens of its many nations the possibility of pursuing the good life with independence and self-determination. The integration of Europe endows the continent with economic power sufficient to compete with the world’s other economies in Asia as well as North and South America. Given these realities, the states of Europe have up to now always construed their interests such that they wanted to belong to the European community. But that is not the point right now. Rather, the point is that in the heart of Europe there exists a country which has already gained membership into the Union and which, should it leave, would be assaulting the system of European integration which has been developing since the Second World War. I know that one hears talk these days about “a foreign attack on Hungary,” but one also needs to look at the situation with Western eyes. Right now in Hungary a kind of political change is taking place with is incompatible with the tradition of western, European, democratic values. Since this process is taking place within the European Union, it weakens the whole European community. That community has to respond. This has nothing to do with an attack; it has to do with the consequence of the government’s policies. Although the new constitution in its words professes “mutual European values,” it in fact promotes distorted Hungarian values and a pseudo-Christanity. Should the country travel down this third way, it will leave the very European community with which it has always expressed solidarity throughout its one thousand year history. Hungary is already internationally isolated; the European Union is mistrustful of its government. Personally, I do not see how this distinctive brand of politics serves Hungarian national interests.

I ask those who have attached their hopes for Hungary to Orbán to reconsider what the
true national interest is! Please do not take my open letter as an attack, but as a fraternal word of warning! I have written in Hungarian, to Hungarians, to my Christian brothers and sisters. I worry that Hungary is becoming like the Balkans and that it will share the fate of the Balkan states. Please don’t allow your political leadership to abuse your faith and tyrannically redraw the map of Europe so that Hungary again falls in the East!

With fraternal greetings:

David Baer
January 17, 2012

Dear Professor,

Let me express my gratitude to you for keeping updated on our country’s situation. At the same time I cannot withhold my critical observations, which I will try to communicate honestly.

My basic objection is that your letter reflects a one-sided and superficial knowledge of both the Hungarian and European situations, and it completely ignores the broader connections.

1. Let’s begin with the question of religious freedom. As a Catholic Bishop I am delighted by the fact that a professor at a Lutheran university cites the Second Vatican Council’s declaration Dignitatis Humanae in connection with freedom of conscience and religion, but I fail to understand how the Basic Law to which you object offends the freedom of conscience and religion. Today in Hungary everyone practices any religion they want, both individually and as a community. The recognition and registration of specific churches has significance only in relation to receiving material support from the state. Here, understandably, the Hungarian state favors those communities which have contributed significantly to the survival of our country during our difficult history, and those communities whose activity have considerable social value, such as maintaining schools and health institutions, or conducting charitable activities.

You also object that such registration of churches is not performed by a court, but now by the Parliament. From this it’s clear that you don’t know enough about the Hungarian situation. To this very day numerous people work in the independent Hungarian justice system who, during the communist system, were the dedicated servants of the party-state dictatorship and who took part in so-called show trials against the church (a show trial is a legal procedure in which everything happens opposite to how things happen in a lawful trial; the verdict is first “conceived,” then the “testimony of witnesses” is prepared to align with the verdict, and the “evidence” is produced).

Furthermore, in the past 20 years this court has demonstrated convincingly that it is unsuitable for registering churches. More than 300 “churches” were registered, the majority of which did meet even the most minimal criteria. I have a copy of the 2007 church directory. I found four “churches” on the list that had their registered address in the same house (in a village), and three of them even had the same person as their official representative. Churches gained recognition which by their very name would bring a smile to the face of a serious believer (of any religion); for example, “Cute Pilgrims from A to Z” or “the Hungarian Witch Association” or the “Church of Gaiety”.

To appreciate the situation we have to realize that a good number of the registered communities conducted no religious activities whatsoever. They applied for the registration so they could receive state subsidies for churches as private businesses—well beyond the benefits that private benefits receive. In large part this explains why we had three Adventist churches, three
Methodist churches, six Jewish churches and no less than thirteen (!) Buddhist churches registered. (To anyone who knows the large branches of Buddhism – Hinjana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, that is, Tibetan, this would be very suspicious. I talked with the Lama of Nepal and he also thought thirteen was ridiculous).

Concerning the churches you mentioned explicitly, I can say the following: These churches have no basis in Hungary. In spite of this, just among Methodists three were registered, as I have mentioned. It’s not easy to decide if all three were really religious communities or only so-called business churches. The Methodist pastor Gábor Iványi is well known among us, but more as a loud mouthed politician than as a preacher. Indeed, his community (they go by the name Hungarian Evangelical Community of Brethren) is not recognized by the World Methodist Church. Of Anglicans we find only one church, which is listed under the name of Saint Margaret’s Anglican/Episcopal Church in the old record book. Judging by their name it belongs to the catholic-friendly high church branch. Their pastor lives in Dunakeszi where there is no Anglican community. The pastor primarily ministers to the staff of the British Embassy in Budapest.

As I write these lines news has arrived that yesterday, February 17, the Hungarian Parliament has recognized another 17 churches, among them the Hungarian Methodist Church and the aforementioned Anglican Church. Thus altogether there are today 31 recognized churches in Hungary. I’d be grateful to you Professor, should you find another country in Europe which supports more religious communities than we do. Should you not find any such country, then I’d ask that in the future you direct your criticism to England, the Scandinavian countries, Bulgaria or Romania, because in these countries the Anglican, Lutheran and the Orthodox Churches still enjoy to this day the status of state churches. (In Romania, the Greek Catholic Dioceses in Romania have yet to receive back in full measure the property taken from them during the Ceaucescu regime and given to the Romanian Orthodox Church)

2. My second objection to your letter concerns the part in which you criticize the European character of the Hungarian government. The way I see it, your knowledge of Europe is also one-sided and deficient. The Europe you hold up in your letter is one which has not existed since the time of Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi and Jean Monnet.

Contemporary Europe is divided not only along economic lines, but also ideologically. There is still a hidden Christian Europe, but there is also a much louder, sharply anti-Christian, ultra-liberal Europe which controls most of the power and the media. The Great Architect can still be recognized on the surface of today’s Europe, but the layer which denies the God of Jesus Christ and the Ten Commandments hovers about. Those are the ones who have given Europe an overdose of freedom, which – similar to an overdose of medicine - does not cure, but poisons a person. To these people European means allowing abortions, free love, recognition of lesbian and homosexual marriage, the proclamation of gender-ideology and the free competition of wild capitalism, which leads to extra profits for the capitalists, bankruptcy for small and mid-sized business, and total poverty for the common people.

This Europe, which celebrates itself as liberal and modern, is in truth:
• A Europe of capitalist out of communists
• A Europe of “freedom fighters” turned dictators and dictators “concerned for democracy”
• A Europe of “moderns” preaching an ethics which is unsustainable and which went out of date 2000 years ago
• A Europe of church persecutors “worried about the freedom of the churches”

People who are consistent in only one thing: an industrial quantity of lying and the pharisaical
deception of many.

When they assert that the Orbán government is autocratic, anti-Europe, staring into the past and not respecting religious freedom, they are discovering their own faults, but in others and not in themselves. I have never wanted to make Viktor Orbán a saint. I know that he is a fallible human being just as we all are; he has his weaknesses and has made mistakes. Yet the charges against him remind me of the Hungarian saying, “the pot calls the kettle black.”

Representatives of the ultra-liberal and the so-called conservative camps were present at that hearing in Strassbourg broadcast by Hír TV. This was a farce, which was organized for the purpose of giving Viktor Orbán a talking-down to in public and to humiliate him. To me it seemed as if the followers of the worlds greatest dictator (Mao Tse Tung) were giving a lesson about democracy and a well-known pedophile was trying to teach morality to Viktor Orbán, a father of five children all of whom were born of the same woman (his wife). Orbán was the most European person at this hearing, with slight exaggeration one might say, the only European. With incredible patience he listened silently to the frothing and shouting Daniel Cohn Bendit and his colleagues, answered the charges calmly, and then asked if as a believer of the traditional family, a patriot and believing Christian, he might remain European.

Moreover, the main charge against him is similar to the one leveled at Lot and his family four thousand years ago: their behavior wasn’t “compatible with Sodom.” But the same problem presented itself to the Prophets as well: “compatibility with Middle-East” was missing from their teaching. So, too, Christians of the first three centuries didn’t learn to live according to the etiquette of the decadent Roman Empire. One comes to think that today’s Europe resembles the Roman Empire in its decline. We don’t yet have people killing each other in coliseums, but there are brutal struggles for huge sums of money; the mass media, instead of catharsis, seeks to satisfy the baser instincts of the people (the demos); men and women, instead of celebrating their children, celebrate their lovers.

Europe no longer sends missionaries to the Third World because it has became a mission region itself, providing soil for missionaries from Africa, India, the Philippines, and even Indonesia. The lines Mihály Váci wrote in the sixties (from his poem “Loyal Uprising”) apply today, not only to pseudo-communist Hungary but to the whole of Europe:

While a new world law smothers and clasps,
and former truths bore new fruit;
the tyrant’s reign arrives,
where there are no prophets nor messiahs.

3. I’ll mention yet another weakness in your letter as my third point, namely, that you fail to consider the role of powers beyond Europe in the “Orbán-affair.” You write about Europe as if it were an independent empire that just happened to encounter some problems with one of its territories. If you believe that this is an internal European matter, then you are much mistaken. Viktor Orbán’s problem is not primarily with the Union but international big capital, the owners of which we suspect to be somewhere on New York’s Wall Street, for which reason we simply refer to them as “America.” That designation is of course wrong: the servants and lords of the dollar have neither country nor nationality. They are citizens of the cosmos, cosmopolitans in the worst sense of the word, who dream of conquering the entire world.

To do that they need money, lots and lots of money. Therefore they are not satisfied with starting wars falsely purported to “import democracy;” nor are they satisfied with purchasing doctors and pharmacists while at the same time building enormous drug-factories and maintaining
control of multinational companies. They also want to make each state one of their interest taxpayers. To this end they are trying to influence free elections and to buy up individual governments. The “good government” is the one that is willing to take up loans with unfavorable conditions so that, by spending the money quickly, it can make its nation an eternal taxpaying colony. This government need not fear to be called dictatorial; it can calmly shoot peaceful demonstrators in the eyes, exclude its own people from their celebrations, erect a fence around the Parliament, and even falsify official documents. Yet such a government will remain “European” and “Democratic.” The only time they get a rap on the head is when they lead their nation to the brink of bankruptcy.

A different set of rules applies to the “bad government,” which tries to break out of the debt trap. That kind of government is downgraded even when the budget deficit would not indicate this. Its Prime Minister is compared to Hitler and Stalin; he is called a gypsy, then a gypsy-hater even if he happens to disband the groups known for their anti-gypsy activities, or if he is the one sending the only gypsy woman to the European Parliament. It doesn’t matter if he extends support to Jewish churches; it doesn’t matter that he has Jewish friends, naturally he can’t escape the charge of “anti-Semitic.”

The owners of international big capital are especially angry at Viktor Orbán because he has introduced many measures against big business (introducing a tax on banks, curtailing the privileges of multinational companies) that many other countries have already adopted or are intending to adopt. That’s why they have organized the comprehensive campaign which we are witnessing today. I would like to emphasize again that this series of actions is being orchestrated out of America by people with money who cannot even be called Americans.

And this is true even if, when compared to the American players (Hillary Clinton, Charles Gati, George Soros), the European figures appear to be in the majority. Big capital has cleverly taken advantage of the division in Europe, making use of office holders in the European Committee (the Union’s government) and the European Parliament, especially those who are Viktor Orbán’s ideological opponents. Of course they also use representatives of the Hungarian opposition as well, who are extremely bothered by the right’s two-third majority in Parliament.

Representatives of the Union know well that the suffocating arms of international big capital also threaten Europe, but they cooperate with it out of material interests, fear, or for ideological reasons. This situation is by no means new. Two thousand years ago the High Council cooperated in the same way with the hated Pontius Pilate. Today, too, Pilate is applauded by every pale-faced Scribe and Pharisee. And of course the false witnesses are not missing either, those whose very way of life is a lie; and since a large part of the media is theirs, they can even get a part of the conservative media to cry out “Crucify him!” in relation to Viktor Orbán and to the Hungarians who are considered an “inferior race” (Ákos Kertész), or even worse “a people of rats.” (This last reference comes from the Nobel Prize winning author Imre Kertész).

Like every country, even the Union has certain regulations which, to be frank, no one can fully adhere to. Yet these regulations are suited perfectly for harassing those (and only those!) governments which don’t “fall into line.” The use of double standards is a common practice of the ultra-liberal world. But neither are Bolshevik methods missing - as I referred to earlier. “If you want to steal, cry thief!” Blame others for your own faults, that way you can direct attention away from yourself.

There is a contract in force with Hungary that the IMF (International Monetary Fund) foisted on the Soviet-controlled communist government of Hungary (in 1982) when it was in dire need of funds. This contract stipulates that properties of the IMF in Hungary are above any
regulation or control, that no legal procedure can be initiated in either a Hungarian or international
court of law against IMF companies, their employees, or even their tenants.

What is this if not an ordinary dictatorship? It’s part of the supra-national, wild capitalist,
ultra-liberal dictatorship, which is derived directly from the tyranny of Hitler or Stalin. Perhaps
you have not heard this, but we know it; in Hungary the cruelest communists were former fascists.
Similarly we see today that the richest capitalists were former communists, and they are the ones
most loudly concerned for democracy in Hungary. Ferenc Gyurcsány, László Kovács, José Manuel
Barroso, Daniel Cohn-Bendit; every one of them was a believer of the red dictatorship, and now
they “worry about democracy” as the minions of the wild capitalist dictatorship.

Adolf Hitler wanted to unite all Germans under his world empire. “Proletariat of the
World, Unite!” – this was Stalin’s motto, who also dreamed of conquering the world. “Big Capital
of the World, Unite into Cartels!” This is the motto of the lords of international big capital who
steal left and right, as David C. Korten described it in his 1995 book titled When Corporations Rule
the World.

The means are different but the goal and the spirit is the same. No dictatorship tolerates
criticism, even less when people step out of line. Yet, somehow in the end they all collapse. The
third type of dictatorship described above is the subject of a poem titled “A New Word on
Tyranny,” which I’m attaching to my letter. I specifically call your attention to the last sections
containing a serious warning for all of us: if we unwittingly accept the misleading propaganda of
a dictatorship, we ourselves become links in the chain; we ourselves become part of tyranny.

From that may the Holy Spirit save us – who alone can deliver the world and our beloved
Europe from the ultra-liberal wild capitalist dictatorship, and may Christian Europe emerge from
the thick layer of ashes where it still hides.

Respectful greetings and love to you:


Dr. Márfi Gyula
Archbishop of Veszprém