

Minority rights in Romania

From Professor Sir Michael Atiyah, FRS, and others

Sir, Fifteen years ago I and 17 colleagues expressed our concern about academic freedom and minority rights in Romania (letter, July 7, 1990). We demanded the restoration of the Hungarian-language Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár. However, no progress has been made so I, along with other colleagues, and supported by 70 others, am now repeating this appeal.

This Hungarian-language university existed in Romania from 1945 till 1959, and forcibly assimilating it into the mainly Romanian Babes-Bolyai University was one of Ceausescu's personal political triumphs. Over the past 15 years it has become clear that the present structure does not serve the adequate training of Hungarian professionals in Romania. Although two private universities in Transylvania are sustained by the Hungarian Government, Hungarians in Romania are heavily under-represented in higher education.

There are successful exam-

ples of higher education in minority languages in Europe and elsewhere — eg, Albanians in Macedonia, Catalans in Spain, Gagauz in Moldavia, Hungarians in Slovakia, Sámi in Norway, and Swedes in Finland, who enjoy the benefits of a public (state-financed) university or universities in their own languages.

We understand Romania's pressing current problems but feel that in order to create a truly democratic society, the Romanian authorities should grant the minority rights mentioned above to the 1½ million-strong Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania. We urge that immediate steps be taken to re-establish the public Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár.

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