

Academic rights in Romania

*From Professor Sir Michael
Atiyah, FRS, and others*

Sir, Now that after many years of communist dictatorship democratic elections were held in Romania, we think it is time to express our concern about academic freedom and minority rights in that country. As soon as the revolution demolished Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship Hungarian professors and intellectuals began to demand the restoration of the Bolyai University at Cluj-Napoca.

This Hungarian-language university existed in Romania from 1945 to 1959 and its suppression, or rather amalgamation into the mainly Romanian university Babes-Bolyai, was one of Ceausescu's personal political triumphs. The number of Hungarian graduates and teaching staff at the present university has been falling dramatically in recent years and it is clear that the present structure does not serve the proper training of a Hungarian professional class in Romania.

Any substantial minority within a nation should be entitled to education in its native language. There are successful examples of higher education in minority languages in Europe and elsewhere — let us just refer to the Finnish example, which allows members of the Swedish minority education in their native language up to and including university level.

We sympathise with Romania's pressing current problems but feel that in order to create a truly democratic society the Romanian authorities should grant the two million-strong Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania a higher institution of education. We therefore urge that immediate steps be taken to re-establish the Bolyai University at Cluj-Napoca.

Yours etc.,

MICHAEL ATIYAH,
A. BAKER,
PATRICK BATESON,
ISAIAH BERLIN,
BRYAN CARTLEDGE,
JOHN DUNN,
ERNEST GELLNER,
ALEXANDER GOEHR,
DOROTHY HODGKIN,
HERBERT E. HUPPERT,
B. D. JOSEPHSON,
G. E. R. LLOYD,
D. H. MELLOR,
ROGER PAULIN,
NORMAN STONE,
TONY TANNER,
J. G. THOMPSON,
HUGH TREVOR-ROPER,

University of Oxford,
Mathematical Institute,
24-29 St Giles, Oxford.
June 28.