

Negotiating National Consensus in Troubled Times

The Dialogue between the Romanian Ecclesiastical Elite in Transylvania and the Hungarian State during the Great War*

MARIUS EPEL, ANDREEA DĂNCILĂ INEOAN

Introduction

HAVING ENTERED the period marking the centenary of World War I, the community of historians is bound to revisit certain analyses that explore, among others, the causes which led to the collapse of multinational empires in the aftermath of the war. The return to these questions became somewhat of a ritual which researchers like to repeat with regularity over time. Despite the recurrences, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary's authority continues to be a fertile topic which proposes challenging perspectives and does not fail to generate new interpretative venues.

In a seminal study, the historian Szász Zoltán argued that the last major dualist experiment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy consisted in the unsuccessful negotiations between the Hungarian political leader, István Tisza, and the representatives of the Romanians in Transylvania¹. The failure of this project was confirmed, just a few years later, by the breakdown of the empire. At a first glance, this finding might seem exaggerated. However, if the immediate context surrounding that event is taken into account, the implications of the failed dialogue between the Hungarian politician and the leaders of the Romanians in Transylvania may confirm the conclusions of the Hungarian historian.

Although the negotiations initiated by the politician István Tisza with the leaders of the Romanians in Dualist Hungary have been the subject of important studies², our analysis will focus strictly on the relationship between the Hungarian policymakers and the Transylvanian Romanians' ecclesiastical elites in the tense context of World War I.

*. This work was supported by the strategic grant UEFISCDI, PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-1231.

The Political Constraints on the Romanian Ecclesiastical Elite in Transylvania

FOR THE Hungarian leaders in general, and for István Tisza in particular, the ecclesiastical elite of the Romanians in Transylvania had always been a privileged partner, envisaged as a useful outlet for the political concerns of the Romanians in Dualist Hungary. Its members approached the issues under debate in a much less tense manner than the political elite, whose intransigent positions often proved to be rather uncomfortable for the decision-makers in Budapest.

Both the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Romanian metropolitans bore the more or less formal title of intimate counsellors of the Emperor. After the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867, the Emperor's supreme patronage and right of inspection were exercised, in the case of the Romanian Churches in Transylvania, by the Minister of Religious Denominations in Budapest³. In order to be considered valid, every new election of a bishop had to be confirmed by Franz Joseph. However, after 1867, the Minister of Religious Denomination and Education in Budapest was the one to forward to the Emperor these proposals of recognition⁴. Thus, in quite numerous instances the Romanian Orthodox bishops elected by the ecclesiastical congresses were rejected by the Hungarian political representatives, ostensibly on grounds of nationalist conduct. In 1874, at the proposal of Minister Ágoston Trefort, Franz Joseph did not recognize the election of the Orthodox Bishop Ioan Popasu as Metropolitan of Transylvania. The same situation repeated in 1902 with Vasile Mangra for the Diocese of Arad, and in 1908-1909 with Miron Cristea for the Diocese of Caransebeş (Hu. Karánsebes).

Those interferences, along with the annual subsidies and wage compensations that the State offered to the Romanian clergy, represented channels whereby the Hungarian Government could exert pressure upon the higher clergy whenever it was deemed that the position of those senior hierarchs did not comply with the agenda of Hungarian politics.

The First Rounds of the Negotiations. Tisza István between the Secular and the Ecclesiastical Partner

PERHAPS NONE of the Hungarian politicians of the dualist era was more aware of the impactful role played by the Romanian bishops in Transylvania than István Tisza. He understood the need to establish a dialogue with the bishops in order to ensure a peace agreement between the Romanians and the Hungarians. Despite being the son of Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza, one of the founders of Hungarian liberalism, István Tisza's political views were a blend of liberalism and conservatism, with certain authoritarian nuances⁵. Like his father, István Tisza believed that the only chance of strengthening Hungary's position in Europe was by maintaining the compromise of 1867⁶. Franz Joseph justly considered him "an anchor of stability" for his empire⁷. Even though he served two non-consecutive terms as Prime Minister (in 1903-1905, and then in 1913-1917), the leaders of the Romanians in Transylvania regarded István

Tisza as the grey eminence of Hungarian politics, a strategist working in the shadows who could easily alter the decisions of the Viennese government⁸. The pinnacle of this Hungarian politician's authority was registered during his second term as Prime Minister, from 1913 onwards. With his second mandate, Tisza's influential role in the foreign policy of the Dual Monarchy became a certainty, and was confirmed by the other European governments involved in what was to become later the first global conflagration⁹.

In the spring of 1910, as parliamentary elections were drawing near, István Tisza, the president of the recently founded National Labor Party, felt growing concern about the radicalized discourse of the Romanian political elite in Transylvania. Supported by other politicians as well, Tisza decided to have a first round of talks with the leaders of the Romanians and intended to foster the consolidation of a moderate wing within the Romanian political movement, with which he could then sign a Romanian-Hungarian pact. Given his aversion towards the sole Romanian party in Transylvania, the N.P.R., whose goal of obtaining an autonomous status for Transylvania was clearly outlined from the very first paragraph of the party statute, Tisza needed a non-political discussion partner. The man who had drawn his attention through his public positions in favor a *modus vivendi* with the Hungarian political establishment was the Romanian financier Ioan Mihiu¹⁰.

Immediately after being approached by the Hungarian officials, Mihiu got into contact with various N.P.R. members, as well as with Romanian bishops, in order to see what their perspectives were and to stave off the possible attacks of the radical nationalists. After consultations with several Romanian leaders, Mihiu submitted a memorandum to Tisza and Prime Minister Khuen-Hederváry, in which he provided a brief overview of all the grievances of the Romanians in Transylvania that were to be addressed in the peace talks. As the Hungarian leaders were willing to grant reforms only in the cultural, educational and ecclesiastical spheres and were opposed to making any political concessions to the Romanians, the negotiations reached a dead end. Tisza concluded: "In this list of grievances there are many things that have astounded me and that cannot be approved by the Hungarian public opinion"¹¹. Speaking about this first unfinished experiment in the Hungarian Parliament, Tisza argued:

"As far as I am concerned, I never wanted such a pact with the nationalities. I've always shared the point of view that I should always stand ready, with open arms, to conclude a pact with my non-Magyar countrymen; but I will never engage in any compromises with the parties of the nationalities"¹².

Tisza's effervescent speech was also due to the sweeping victory of his party in the parliamentary elections of 1910, which had fundamentally changed the balance of power between the Romanian and the Hungarian leaders. For the Romanian politicians in Transylvania, this ballot had brought about a complete failure: only 5 N.P.R. representatives had managed to be elected as MPs in the Hungarian Parliament.

In this unsettling context for the Romanian society, Tisza extended a direct invitation to the Romanian higher clergy, urging them to take over the responsibility for renewed negotiations with the Hungarian Government¹³. One year later, in 1911, on the occa-

sion of a festivity, the same politician declared that only senior prelates were entitled to take a leadership role in the discussions regarding the Romanian-Hungarian Pact:

“[...] not only do the Romanian higher clergy, especially the clergy of the G[ree]k Ort[hodox] Church, exercise ecclesiastical power, but the entire trust of their co-nationals is vested in them. It is in their hands, therefore, that ecclesiastical power is held jointly with great political power, stemming from the trust of their believers”¹⁴.

It should be noted that, aside from the poor results obtained by the Romanians' party in these elections, the N.P.R. members received another major blow which negatively affected their public image: Vasile Mangra, the Orthodox Vicar of Oradea/Nagyvárad and one of the most vehemently militant spokesmen of the Romanians in late nineteenth-century Hungary, ran for an MP position on the lists of the National Labor Party¹⁵.

The Orthodox vicar justified his siding with the Hungarian Government by giving the example of the Transylvanian Saxons: although their population amounted to no more than 220,000 individuals, they had six higher secondary schools, two lower secondary schools, and several ordinary schools. By contrast, the Romanians, who totalled three million inhabitants, had no more than one lower and four higher secondary schools¹⁶.

Mangra's victory in the parliamentary elections of 1910 strengthened his relations with the president of the National Labor Party, István Tisza. On the other hand, “Mangra's defection” and the internal conflicts of the party strongly undermined the authority of the N.P.R., which was to face a relentless crisis in the period 1910-1914¹⁷.

A new round of negotiations was held in early 1913, but to no avail. The next one took place from December 1913 to February 1914, in the context of the changing balance of power after the Balkan Wars. Ionel Brătianu, Prime Minister of Romania, gracefully exploited Austria-Hungary's need for securing the Kingdom of Romania as a faithful alliance partner. Brătianu used his influence in Vienna and Berlin to force the Hungarian Government to reconsider the rights of the Romanians in Transylvania¹⁸. At the end of November 1912, Tisza informed the Romanian politician Alexandru Constantinescu, who had been entrusted by the Government in Bucharest with the mission of persuading the Hungarian politicians to resume the negotiations, that he preferred to discuss matters either with Ioan Mișu or with the Romanian bishops. However, the Romanian-Hungarian dialogue involved three N.P.R. members this time, namely, Iuliu Maniu, Teodor Mihali, and Valeriu Braniște¹⁹. Tisza's insistence that the bishops should be his discussion partners was quickly counteracted by the Romanian politicians from Transylvania, who persuaded the religious leaders that their involvement in such undertakings “would weaken their prestige before the faithful” and would be considered a “political mistake”²⁰.

The Romanian-Hungarian talks focused primarily on issues of educational, administrative and legal nature. Hence, Count István Tisza involved the then Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education and the Minister of Justice in their preparation. These meetings produced no visible outcome. At the end of the talks, Tisza wrote a letter to the Romanian bishops, making veiled allegations that “the more peaceful ele-

ments, with a better political vision, have not dared to take the matter to a decision-making level”²¹. The final meeting between Tisza and the N.P.R. representatives took place on 6 February 1914. The Romanian party officially announced, on 17 February, that the negotiations had come to an end²². The repeated requests from the Romanian political leaders were, in Tisza’s opinion, a sign that they could not accept any amendment to the party’s program that would make the Hungarian-Romanian cooperation possible²³. Convinced that behind the decision to cease the negotiations were the intrigues of Franz Ferdinand’s Belvedere Cabinet²⁴, Tisza addressed another direct invitation to the Romanian clergy. He urged the clergymen to become involved in this matter in their triple capacity: “as servants of the Lord, as holders of high offices in the Hungarian administration, and as leaders of the Romanian people, who have placed their trust in them”²⁵. Emphasizing the responsibility incumbent on the Romanian hierarchs, Tisza did not omit to mention that he had a mandate from Franz Joseph to act in this manner:

“I do so not only in my own name, but also comply with the command of His Majesty who, as a parent who cares for all his subjects with the same love, lays emphasis on the success of actions undertaken in the service of peace and demands that the clergy show their full commitment in supporting these actions”²⁶.

Negotiation Strategies in Wartime. Tisza’s Attempt to Increase the Political Authority of the Romanian Bishops

TISZA’S INVITATION to the Romanian bishops in early 1914 opened a new round of Romanian-Hungarian negotiations, which started immediately after the outbreak of the war. Whereas during the first reconciliation attempt Tisza had chosen a moderate Romanian and had subsequently accepted the involvement of several N.P.R. delegates, this time the Hungarian Prime Minister appealed directly to the ecclesiastical elite of the Transylvanian Romanians. Keith Hitchins considered these negotiation rounds to represent nothing but attempts to neutralize the N.P.R.’s action and to undermine the secular leadership by including the ecclesiastical partner in this game of political representation²⁷.

As the exceptionality of war replaced the normality of politics, the Romanian Churches in Transylvania fully experienced the pressure the State. Therefore, in 1914 the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic bishops were particularly vulnerable to political power and quite prone to accommodating the Hungarian demands. From this point of view, Tisza’s choice of dialogue partners was more than appropriate.

On 22 September 1914, Tisza wrote a letter to the Orthodox Metropolitan of Sibiu (hu. Nagyszeben), Ioan Mețianu, informing him that he had decided to propose the adoption of three types of reforms: educational, in favor of the Romanian denominational schools; electoral, enabling the Romanians to have a more important political representation; and administrative, as the Romanian language was to be sanctioned as an official language in the direct communication with the State authorities.

The measures Tisza proposed had come as the result, he insisted, of the Romanian soldiers' admirable conduct during the war: "Any divergence is now of secondary import and any animosity is about to fade. We are united by the holy sentiment of love for the motherland and the patriotic spirit of sacrifice"²⁸. He concluded that the Romanian-Hungarian solidarity on the battlefield should also be rewarded at home, in Transylvania, however without infringing the principles of the national unitary Hungarian State. In other words, the framework within which Tisza agreed to engage in talks with the religious leaders was that of the community of interest between the Romanians and the Hungarians. In times of war, such a community of interests had proved to be of vital importance.

After reassuring the Metropolitan of Sibiu that the initiative and responsibility for resuming those discussions were entirely his, Tisza informed him that "the time for action has come" and requested him "to intervene, with the weight of his authority," in backing this undertaking²⁹. Tisza's gesture, however, was not spontaneous at all: it had been imposed by the Austrian and German decision-makers, who believed the Transylvanian matter to be of decisive importance for the outcome of the war³⁰. Pressed by Vienna to make urgent concessions, Tisza wrote to Leopold Berchtold, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 10 September 1914, that the war would provide the opportunity of reconciliation with the Romanians, but that he would not accept to change in any way the Hungarian constitutional principles³¹. Although the Hungarian Prime Minister had insisted since the outbreak of the military conflict on dissociating the Romanian matter (persuading Romania to side with the Central Powers) from the Transylvanian matter³², the context of the war had forced him to restart the rather strained peace negotiations with the Romanians in Transylvania.

Ioan Mețianu promptly replied to Tisza's letter, assuring him of his full cooperation in this matter:

"Your Excellency's gratitude and sympathy towards the Romanian people, who gave such brilliant proof of their loyalty to the king and the common homeland during the days of heavy trials, had strong echoes in my heart. I shall gladly lend a hand to the noble work that is aimed at guaranteeing and safeguarding good relations in the hope that this work will bring rich rewards and that, with the help of God, it will lay the foundations for a brighter and happier future!"³³.

Again, the Hungarian Prime Minister had to double his efforts, invoking the authority of Emperor Franz Josef and informing the Metropolitan that the monarch endorsed that entire undertaking. In choosing to resort to the name of the Emperor-King, Tisza relied on the Romanians' dynastic loyalism, which revolved around the imperial figure. Through such strategies, he sought to pump new doses of legitimacy into his action.

A mere few days after sending this letter, Tisza addressed another letter to all the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Romanian bishops, informing them that he was to grant a pardon to all the Romanians facing political charges and that the Interior Minister had signed a decree allowing the Romanians in Hungary to use their national colors, alongside the Hungarian flag³⁴. For the Romanian higher clergy, these small conces-

sions demonstrated that the dialogue with the Hungarian policymakers could lead to actual gains. Tisza backed his promises this time with concrete measures targeting the Romanian population of Transylvania.

Compared to the previous situations, the new round of negotiations brought additional complications. As early as August 1914, the N.P.R. decided to suspend its activity and asked its former members to sign any political statements they might give in their own name, without involving the party structures in any way³⁵. Under the new circumstances, such diplomatic gestures were necessary in order not to arouse suspicions over the relations with the State authorities.

Tisza's approach caused imbalances at the level of the Transylvanian Romanians' internal governance structures. The political leaders were afraid that the bishops would be flattered by Tisza's attention and would attend the peace talks without consulting with the N.P.R., allowing their actions to acquire an autonomous character. Iuliu Maniu, a prominent member of the party, did not hesitate to state in an interview published in *Românul* (The Romanian), the official newspaper of the N.P.R., on 13 November 1914, that the party and its executive committee were the only bodies entitled to issue directives regarding the political goals of the Romanian people, in general, and the negotiations with the Tisza, in particular³⁶.

In his correspondence with the higher clergy, Tisza claimed that he was not after an official statement by the N.P.R. and that he was satisfied with having received the bishops' prior approval³⁷. The Hungarian Prime Minister understood that the Romanian party's involvement in the negotiations would entail assuming firmer obligations (the signing of a protocol, etc.). By contrast, the bishops would clearly not have dared to demand additional guarantees in the autumn of 1914, ensuring therefore a much smoother path for the negotiations. Tisza himself confessed that he had been trying to avoid contact with the political leaders of the party so as not to create the appearance of a pact with the N.P.R.³⁸.

Thrilled by the openness demonstrated by the Orthodox Metropolitan, Tisza also wrote to the other Romanian bishops in Transylvania, asking them to "publicly express their agreement" and arguing that the measures proposed would serve as the basis of the Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation. Tisza requested them to use their entire influence in order to obtain the desired public reactions to his offer from the "honorable men" and the Romanian press³⁹. He justified relaunching the Romanian-Hungarian negotiations by reference to the danger represented by Russia. Throughout the war he was to relentlessly resort to this argument, loading it with the most serious connotations.

The Hungarian Prime Minister's persuasion strategies included the use of emotional-religious arguments in his discussions with the Romanian bishops: "God will bless you if you take part in this noble work"⁴⁰.

Whereas in the case of the Orthodox in Transylvania Vasile Mangra remained the privileged discussion partner for Tisza, for the community of Greek Catholics, this role was played by Vasile Hossu, Bishop of Gherla (hu. Szamosújvár). The exchange of letters between them shows that relations between the two authorities were as amiable as possible. Both of these leaders of the Romanian ecclesiastical elite in Transylvania represented true confidantes of the Hungarian Premier. It was only them that Tisza addressed

as “dear friend” and towards whom he used a host of other lexical marks, denoting their visibly close relationships.

In early October, Tisza confessed to Bishop Hossu that at the request of King Carol of Romania, he had decided to send a delegation of Transylvanians to Bucharest to quell the concerns of the public opinion there, which was particularly frantic and hostile to Austria-Hungary. He then warned Hossu to be watchful and, at the right time, to activate his entire network of supporters of the Hungarian-Romanian reconciliation, who were to express that position publicly⁴¹.

If this campaign of ensuring the loyalty of the Romanians was to fail, Tisza cautioned that the entire matter would be blocked in the future by the ever more “impatient” stream of Hungarian chauvinism⁴². Incidentally, during this first phase of the negotiations, the strategy Tisza relied upon was undoubtedly based on “carrot and stick” incentives, as the concessions he offered were inevitably coupled with a series of perceived threats—both external (the Russian danger) and internal (the consolidation of the intransigent Hungarian faction, who in the future would no longer allow such exercises of goodwill towards the Romanians)⁴³.

Over the last three months of 1914, the correspondence carried by Tisza with the Romanian bishops in Transylvania revolved around obtaining their public acknowledgment of the help the Hungarian Government was offering them. The politician in Budapest sought to turn the bishops into faithful agents of his own policy, as he requested them to recruit politicians within the N.P.R. who would support his initiatives. On all occasions, however, Tisza was concerned to obtain a private consent that would not involve, in any way, an institutional partner. After the Romanian bishops expressed their willingness to carry out this project, the Hungarian Prime Minister also invited the political leaders to the discussions (Aurel C. Popovici, Iuliu Maniu, and Alexandru Vaida Voievod). Noticing their reluctance, Tisza wrote to Bishop Hossu to persuade him that this was the last time when such discussions could take place⁴⁴.

After the first year of the war, the Romanian press reported numerous cases of desertion or mutilations among the Romanians who fought in Galicia. Aiming to dismantle any anti-loyalist premise associated with these cases, Tisza wrote to Vasile Hossu, the Greek Catholic Bishop, assuring him that those gestures had been triggered by war traumas and not by some political choices⁴⁵. In this case, too, Tisza contacted the Church leaders, providing them with approved interpretations about the events on the front and using them as mouthpieces in disseminating the official government version among the Romanian society. The Hungarian Prime Minister had realized that they were the most inspired interface between the State authority and the communities of Romanians in Transylvania, as well as between the Hungarian and the Romanian political decision-makers during the war years.

Through Vasile Hossu, the Greek Catholic Bishop, Tisza attempted to negotiate even some deputy positions in the electoral districts which had become vacant due to the demise of the candidates⁴⁶. There is no doubt that Tisza used the authority of this bishop to find out what was happening inside the Romanian politicians’ camp. Upon learning that the editor of *Reichpost*, Friedrich Funder, a Transylvanian Saxon hostile to Hungarian policies and close to the German political circles, got in touch with mem-

bers of the N.P.R., the Hungarian Premier immediately wrote to the bishop, requesting details about the object of such meetings⁴⁷. Deeply upset, Tisza reiterated that he would not admit any external partner to pose as a mediator in the Romanian-Hungarian talks, referring, of course, to the pressures that the Germans exerted against Budapest⁴⁸.

Started early in the autumn of 1914, Tisza's efforts in obtaining the loyalty declarations of the prelates came to fruition at the outset of 1915. These clerics urged their parishioners to adopt a loyal attitude towards the State authorities, not only in the press or at some public events, but also in the pastorals they issued during the great religious feasts. Sensing the fact that the bishops might have been pressured to secure the political loyalty of their believers, the Romanian newspapers in Transylvania did not insist on their reactions, much to Tisza's dislike. The Hungarian Prime Minister urged even the county leaders to warn the editors that such gestures could be interpreted as evidence of hostility and punished accordingly⁴⁹.

While the ecclesiastical elite had been involved in negotiations with the Hungarian authorities ever since the outbreak of the war, the political elite was oriented towards gaining the support of the authorities in Berlin, which they attempted to persuade that certain concessions granted by Tisza to the Transylvanian Romanians would mean Romania's entry into war on the side of the Central Powers. Whereas the bishops were willing to negotiate a platform of demands previously approved by Tisza, the political leaders preferred an all-out campaign, insisting, in addition to the already classical grievances, on a Romanian Minister in Budapest and a Romanian University in Transylvania. On 17 June 1915, Tisza met the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg in Berlin. When the Chancellor proposed the adoption of the measures described above, the Hungarian politician acknowledged the effects of the Transylvanian lobby and its assiduous efforts to enlist the support of its alliance partners⁵⁰.

Despite the German-Austrian pressures he was subjected to, Tisza's interest in negotiating a Romanian-Hungarian agreement took a back seat, particularly after Bulgaria joined the Central Powers on 6 September 1915. After this moment, the Hungarian Prime Minister considered Romania as a "negligible actor" that could no longer pressure him in any way regarding the policies he intended to adopt on the issue of the Romanians in Transylvania⁵¹. A change of attitude towards the elite of the Romanians in Transylvania became quite visible at that time: the censorship of the major newspapers intensified and a growing number of priests and teachers who were under the suspicion of harboring hostile attitudes towards the Hungarian State were arrested and sentenced to prison⁵².

The Political Act of Electing a Metropolitan

ON 3 February 1916, Metropolitan Mețianu passed away and the process of electing a new church leader seemed more delicate than ever. Under the statutes of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the new metropolitan was to be elected by a National Ecclesiastical Congress, composed of 120 persons, of which one-third were members of the clergy and two-thirds were representatives of the laity⁵³. Extremely interested in these elections, Tisza strove to impose in the elective structures as many pro-

Government Romanians as possible. In a circular dispatched to the prefects, he recommended that “patriotic elements, independent of the national terror” should be included in the Ecclesiastical Congress that was to elect the new metropolitan⁵⁴.

Using the threat of withdrawing the priests’ state-sponsored wages and appointing a ministerial advisor to supervise the vote, Tisza noticeably influenced the process of selecting the electors. The elections constituted an abuse of power and triggered numerous reactions in the Romanian press. The autonomy of the Church was severely affected by this electoral simulacrum⁵⁵. The Hungarian Prime Minister was aware that Vasile Mangra, the Vicar of Oradea and an MP representing the National Labor Party, was the pragmatic candidate he needed in order to achieve the Romanian-Hungarian peace. On 24 July 1916, Mangra obtained 71 of the total 114 votes, occupying the metropolitan see in Sibiu. Thus, Tisza had made sure that the highest office an Orthodox high prelate could hold in Transylvania now belonged to his reliable partner.

Romania Entering the War or the Epilogue to the Romanian Church–Hungarian State Dialogue in Transylvania

THE REAL litmus test of the relations between the Romanian bishops and the Hungarian political leaders took place in the summer of 1916, when Romania renounced its position of neutrality and joined the war on the side of the Entente. The entry of the Romanian Army troops in Transylvania on 27 August 1916 challenged the ecclesiastical elite to become more assertive in relation to the political power. Metropolitan Mangra considered that the Romanian Army’s entry into Transylvania was a “criminal attempt” and used it as a pretext for reaffirming “the Romanians’ unshakable faithfulness and loyalty towards the dynasty”⁵⁶. After decades in which the Transylvanian intellectuals had endorsed their cultural unity with the Kingdom of Romania, the reactions of the middle and lower clergy could no longer be kept under control by the prudent ecclesiastical elite. Especially after the withdrawal of the Romanian Army from Transylvania, the Romanian elite members were subjected to large-scale inquiries by the Hungarian authorities, who decided to incarcerate in the camps at Sopron, Győr, Szolnok, and elsewhere a significant number of those considered disloyal. The charges brought against these intellectuals were that they had sided with the enemy, in this case the Romanian Army⁵⁷. The ecclesiastical hierarchs in Transylvania had to explain to the political authorities why certain priests had fled seeking refuge, during the withdrawal of the Romanian troops, and why they had abandoned their posts and crossed the border into the Kingdom of Romania. The distrust with which Tisza István treated the issue of the Romanian priests in Transylvania from that point onward could never again be surmounted.

Domestically, the “Romanian invasion” of Transylvania was a strong blow for Tisza’s government. The Hungarian opposition demanded his resignation and accused him of poor management of the Hungarian-Romanian dispute⁵⁸. Most likely due to this polit-

ical pressure and the increasingly tense situation of the last years of war, Tisza no longer had the courage to continue the negotiating rounds with the ecclesiastical elite. In early 1917, he wrote to Count Czernin, the new Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, that in his opinion the launching of peace talks in the autumn of 1914 had been a regrettable “tactical mistake,” which he had made due to the pressures exerted by King Carol and Germany. At that time, the Hungarian Prime Minister confessed that he was not going to offer any concession to the Romanians until the end of the war⁵⁹.

The declarations of loyalty the political and cultural elites in Transylvania were obliged to sign in the spring of 1917⁶⁰ indicated an “archaic political culture”⁶¹ of the central authorities in Budapest, who desperately resorted to these formulas of forced obedience. Invoking the “unpatriotic” behavior of some Romanian teachers in the autumn of 1916, Minister Albert Apponyi prepared, at the beginning of the following year, the project of “cultural zone,” under which denominational schools in the border counties of Transylvania were to be nationalized.⁶² This was another experiment that was extremely difficult to approach by the Romanian hierarchs.

Judging by the letters they exchanged with Tisza, the relationship between the Romanian bishops and the Hungarian political leaders registered an evident breakdown during the landmark year of 1916. After the entry of the Romanian Army in Transylvania, the Hungarian Government could no longer conceal its lack of trust in the Romanian clergy. Even though Metropolitan Mangra tried to disprove the accusations made by the Hungarian secular power during the last two years of armed conflict, the Government in Budapest continued to employ a policy of force in relation to the Romanian Churches in Transylvania. In addition to the project in the cultural sphere and the nationalization of the denominational schools, Albert Apponyi, the Minister of Education and Religious Denominations, insisted that every assembly of the Romanian Churches should take place in the presence of a Government Commissioner, who could even dissolve that congress if the situation demanded it⁶³.

From a policy of accommodation which had sent out promising signals at the beginning of the war, the relations of the Hungarian political power-holders with the Romanian bishops in Transylvania were marked, after 1916, by constraints that nearly did away with ecclesiastical autonomy. In the period 1916-1918, the two “ecclesiastical” pillars of Prime Minister István Tisza, Vasile Hossu and Vasile Mangra, disappeared from history, passed away researchers to face the challenge of interpreting certain attitudes that were to bear the label of “national treason” in the postwar period.

Conclusions

AT THE end of this historical foray, we should highlight the outcomes of these repeatedly resumed and repeatedly failed negotiations. Their dissatisfactory results can be accounted for by reference to several aspects. Firstly, it should be noted that a fairly large number of “negotiators” were involved in them, which complicated beyond measure any attempt to reach a consensus. These negotiations were not limited to the two parties engaged in dialogue, namely, the elite of the Romanians in Transylvania

and the leaders of the Hungarian Government. Bucharest, Berlin and Vienna visibly influenced their course, albeit merely from the shadows. For the Transylvanian Romanians, the talks were an opportunity to clarify and update their political program, but also an opportunity to negotiate their position within Dualist Hungary along two main lines: a moderate one, represented by the ecclesiastical elite, willing to engage in face-to-face discussions with the Hungarian partner and ostentatiously display their legitimate desiderata, and an intransigent one, belonging to the political elite, who preferred diversionary channels in wartime, relying primarily on the support provided by the authorities in Berlin. Although the invitations Tisza extended to the elites of the Transylvanian Romanians could produce inner rifts and, subsequently, precipitate a serious crisis of authority, the secular and ecclesiastical camps eventually overcame the blockages and reached a relative consensus on these approaches.

We cannot surmise how this bifurcating strategy would have worked if the Romanian-Hungarian relationships had not faced the test of the Romanian Army's entry into Transylvania in 1916, an event that completely changed the previous balance of power. The war was a setting against which both the elite of the Romanians in Transylvania and the Hungarian authorities were forced to make certain compromises, inherent in any negotiation. However, the different horizons of expectation and certain irreconcilable agendas meant that the Hungarian-Romanian *Ausgleich* of 1914-1916 would be much more difficult to accomplish than the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, adjusting the dimensions and the stakes of course.



Notes

1. Zoltán Szász, *History of Transylvania*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 715.
2. Ioan Mihu, *Spicuiuri din gândurile mele politice, culturale, economice*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1938; Lucian Boia, "Contribuții privind mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania în anii 1910-1914," *Revista de Istorie*, 4 (25), 1972, p. 783-796; Keith Hitchins, "The Nationality Problem in Hungary: István Tisza and the Rumanian National Party, 1910-1914," *Journal of Modern History* 53, 1981, p. 619-651.
3. Valer Moga, "De la patriotismul dinastic la România Mare. Bisericile românești din Transilvania în tumultul politic al anilor 1914-1918," in *Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Historica* 15 (II), 2011, p. 347-370.
4. Mircea Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar față de Biserica românească of Transilvania în perioada dualismului (1867-1918)*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1986, p. 61.
5. István Deák, "The Decline and Fall of Habsburg Hungary 1914-1918," in *Hungary in Revolution 1918-1919. Nine Essays*, edited by Iván Völgyes. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1971, p. 10-21.
6. Tamás Baranyi, "Possibility of a Hungarian Way: Count Tisza and His Foreign Policy Concept (1903-1914)," in *Romania and European Diplomacy. From Cabinet Diplomacy to the 21th Century Challenges*, edited by Gheorghe Clivetti, Adrian Bogdan Ceobanu, Adrian Vițalaru, Trieste, Iași, Beit Casa Editrice Trieste, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2012, p. 259-268.

7. Gábor Vermes, *István Tisza. The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 365.
8. Alexandru Vaida Voievod, *Memorii*, IV, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia 1997, p. 58.
9. John Leslie, "The Antecedents of Austria-Hungary's War Aim. Policies and Policy-Makers in Vienna and Budapest Before and During 1914," in *Archiv und Forschung: Das Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in seiner Bedeutung für die Geschichte Österreichs und Europas*, edited by Elisabeth Springer, Leopold Kammerhofer, Vienna, Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1993, p. 340; G. Vermes, *István Tisza...*, 1985, p. 465.
10. Valentin Orga, *Mișcarea națională din Transilvania: grupul neoactivist de la Omîștie*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2001; I. Mișu, *Spicuviri...*, 1938.
11. The speech Tisza delivered in the Hungarian Parliament on 23 March 1911. *Discursurile contelui Ștefan Tisza 1893-1915. Contribuțiuni istorice la cunoașterea chestiunii naționalităților în Ungaria*, Budapest, Tipografia Poporul Român, p. 67.
12. Count Istvan Tisza's speech on the nationalities issue, delivered in the session of 11 July 1910 of the Hungarian Chamber. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
14. A toast made by Count Tisza on 29 January 1911 at a banquet organized in his honor in Arad by his Excellency Bishop Ioan I. Papp. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
15. Marius Eppel, *Un mitropolit și epoca sa: Vasile Mangra (1850-1918)*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006; Idem, *Politics and Church in Transylvania 1875-1918*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2012.
16. Marius Eppel, *Vasile Mangra. Activitatea politică 1875-1918*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2004, p. 218.
17. L. Boia, *Contribuții privind...*, 1972, p. 783-796.
18. G. Vermes, *István Tisza...*, 1985, p. 197.
19. L. Boia, *Contribuții privind...*, 1972, p. 795.
20. A. Vaida Voievod, *Memorii...*, 1997, p.49.
21. A letter from Tisza to all the Romanian bishops, 2 February 1914. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái* 4/II, Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1924, p. 156.
22. L. Boia, *Contribuții privind...*, 1972, p. 796.
23. A letter from Tisza to all the Romanian bishops, 2 February 1914. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái* 4/II, 1924, p. 156.
24. G. Vermes, *István Tisza...*, 1985, p. 512. Tisza's fears were not unfounded, as Franz Ferdinand himself confessed in a letter to Count Czernin, the Minister of Austria-Hungary in Bucharest: "I am fundamentally opposed to a settlement, for it threatens to drive our Romanians into the Hungarian, anti-Habsburg camp, and that would be highly dangerous for me personally..." Francis Ferdinand's draft letter to Czernin, January 1914. *Kriegsarchiv, Wien, Militärkanzlei Franz Ferdinand, Rumänische Akten* (no file number) apud. Z. Szász, *History of...*, 2002, p. 727.
25. A letter from Tisza to all the Romanian bishops, February 2, 1914. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái* 4/II 1924, p. 156.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
27. K. Hitchins, *The Nationality...*, 1981, p. 641.
28. Tisza to Mețianu, the Ortodox Metropolitan of Transylvania, 22 September 1914. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái* 4/ II, 1924, p. 272.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 272-275.
30. Z. Szász, *History of...*, 2002, p. 733.

31. Carvel De Bussy (ed.), *Count Stephen Tisza, Prime Minister of Hungary. Letters (1914-1916)*, New York, Peter Lang, 1991, p. 43.
32. See the letter sent by Tisza to Ottokar von Czernin, the Austrian Minister in Bucharest, on 26 September 1914 and the letter he sent to Heinrich von Tschirschky on 3 November 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 52-57.
33. Metropolitan Mețianu to Tisza on September 22, 1914, *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái 4/ II* 1924, p. 272-274.
34. Tisza to the Romanian bishops (I. Pap, M. Cristea, T. Frențiu, D. Radu, V. Hossu) on September 24, 1914. *Ibid.* p. 278.
35. Liviu Maior, *Doi ani mai devreme: (ardeleni, bucovineni și basarabeni în război 1914-1916)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2016.
36. “D. Dr. Iuliu Maniu despre scrisoarea contelui Șt. Tisza - Interviewul nostru cu d. dr. Iuliu Maniu. Arad, 13 Noemvrie,” *Românul*, 241, Arad, 1914, p. 1.
37. Tisza to the Romanian bishops (I. Pap, M. Cristea, T. Frențiu, D. Radu, V. Hossu) on 24 September 1914. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái 4/II*, p. 278.
38. Tisza to Bishop Vasile Hossu on 10 October 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
39. Tisza to the Romanian bishops (I. Pap, M. Cristea, T. Frențiu, D. Radu, V. Hossu) on 24 September 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
41. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 2 October 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
43. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 10 October 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
44. G. Vermes, *István Tisza...*, 1985, p. 284.
45. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 20 June 1915. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái III*, 1926, p. 373.
46. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 13 May 1915. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
47. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 20 June 1915. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
48. Tisza to Bishop V. Hossu on 12 June 1915. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
49. Tisza to the county leaders from the border areas on 3 July 1915. *Gróf Tisza István összes munkái IV*, p. 6.
50. Ioan Rusu Abrudeanu, *Păcatele Ardealului față de sufletul Vechiului Regat: fapte, documente și facsimile*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1930, p. 252.
51. L. Maior, *Doi ani...*, 2016, p. 78.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
53. M. Eppel, *Un mitropolit...*, 2006, p. 325.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 328-352.
56. *Telegraful Român*, LXIX (85), 1916, p. 345.
57. Sebastian Stanca, *Contribuția preoțimii române din Ardeal la Războiul pentru Întregirea Neamului 1916-1919*, Cluj-Napoca, Cartea Românească, 1925.
58. G. Vermes, *István Tisza...*, 1985, p. 351-354.
59. I. Rusu Abrudeanu, *Păcatele...*, 1930, p. 259.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
61. Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires. Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East 1914-1923*, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 71.
62. M. Păcurariu, *Politica statului...*, 1986, p. 164-178.
63. M. Eppel, *Un mitropolit...*, 2006, p. 394.

Abstract**Negotiating National Consensus in Troubled Times. The Dialogue between the Romanian Ecclesiastical Elite in Transylvania and the Hungarian State during the Great War**

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy was characterized by confessional multiplicity and an entanglement between the State(s) and Church(es) present on its territories. The ecclesiastical elites who headed the various Churches, and who often found themselves precariously perched on the thin borderline between confessional, national, and political allegiances, were a key historical actor in many political events during the existence of the Dual Monarchy. For the non-Hungarian ethnic groups within this state structure, the Church represented more than an institution mediating between the human and the divine: it was an essential pillar in the process of ethnic and national identification. During the First World War, this essential quality of the national Churches became ever more significant for both the communities they shepherded and the state authorities.

Keywords

Romanian ecclesiastical elite, nationalities, Hungary, WWI, state policies