

Between National Sentiment and Political Correctness From the Activity of Bishop Miron Cristea during the Years of the First World War

DANIEL ALIC



Bishop MIRON CRISTEA (center) listening, together with the other participants in the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, as Bishop IULIU HOSSU reads the Declaration of Union.

Daniel Alic

Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Theology and Social Sciences, Eftimie Murgu University of Reșița. Latest book: **Protopopiatele și parohiile Episcopiei Caransebeșului: Micromonografii** (Deaneries and Parishes of the diocese of Caransebeș: Micro-monographs) (2017).

FROM THE beginning of his ecclesiastical activity, Miron Cristea (1868–1939) was perceived by his contemporaries as a national fighter.¹ His speeches on his ordination and consecration as bishop of Caransebeș enthused the whole Romanian territory, and many consider that Miron Cristea is the “icon of the bishops” of those times of national struggle.²

By the nature of their priestly mission, the church ministers were closest to the needs of the believers and, therefore, almost without exception, supported the national emancipation of the Romanians. At a time of electoral corruption and restriction of the right to vote, which dominated the beginning of the twentieth century,³ the clergy supported the candidates of the Romanian National Party. In official circumstances, the hierarchs’ discourse toed the official line, but was com-

pletely different in reality. For example, in May 1910, the priests were urged to see that church objects (banners used for processions, bells) should not be used “for electoral propaganda.”⁴ In secret, however, the bishop protected the nationalist candidates and involved the priests in their election. The ministers of the churches that showed anti-Romanian attitudes by supporting the government candidates were challenged to leave the parishes, as is the case of the priest Ioan Chendi from Petnic.⁵

The attitude of the government towards the Romanian population was obvious immediately after the 1910 elections, when, affected by floods, the believers from the south of the eparchy approached the state for help. The local administration responded to such requests with the words, “if you want help, go to Dr. Vlad,⁶ because you voted for him.”⁷ Finally, after repeated calls by the diocesan bishop, the authorities helped the victims. In a letter to Ioan Bianu, Miron Cristea confessed that the consistory had also initiated numerous collections, even among the Romanians from the kingdom, in order to help those “mocked by the political administration.”⁸

In the following years, the main objective of the national struggle of the Romanians was the universal franchise,⁹ or other topics of a national nature. In a speech delivered on 12/25 June 1913, in the Budapest Chamber of Magnates, Bishop Miron Cristea spoke about priestly endowment. Considering that this issue was one that was included in the chauvinistic vision of Budapest, he proposed that the priestly endowment be assigned according to the qualification of the priests, not according to their political preferences. Bishop Ioan Papp from Arad and the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Victor Mihali, present at the speech, also agreed with this proposal.¹⁰ In trying to point to the authorities’ indifference to all the problems of the Romanians, not only the ecclesiastical ones, Miron Cristea showed that “so far the governments have not remembered the Romanians except when it came to taxes and military service.”¹¹ His speech was a first direct national intervention in the plenary of the Chamber of Magnates after his consecration as bishop.

Following this speech, Iuliu Maniu congratulated Miron Cristea: “Please receive, Your Grace, our warmest congratulations for the beautiful speech held in the House of Magnates. We have all read with great satisfaction and deep emotion Your Grace’s dignified and energetic Romanian words that have not been heard inside those walls for a long time. May God reward you plentifully for the joy you have brought us.”¹² The speech was also published in the newspaper *Viitorul* (The Future) of Bucharest, as well as in other periodicals of the time.¹³

The circumstances of the First World War made the whole activity of the diocese of Caransebeș difficult. The most acute problem faced by the church administration at the eparchial center was the drafting for military service of the

schoolteachers and priests. The running of the confessional schools, which had faced a shortage of schoolteachers even before the beginning of the war, was largely secured by retired schoolteachers and the priests that were left in the parishes. Most of the churches of the diocese were also left without priests, as more than fifty priests from the diocese of Caransebeș had been drafted and had left for the front, especially the priests from the border areas.¹⁴ These circumstances intensified the dissatisfaction of the population and increased their desire for national freedom, especially as the Romanians were forced to fight in a war that was not theirs.

However, the diocese of Caransebeș had to obey the orders and decisions of the Budapest government and to persuade its believers to support the war effort. Thus, numerous pastoral letters and circular orders were issued, which the priests were obliged to read in churches and which, at first glance, were unconditional acts of obedience to the directives of the political leadership.

The first pastoral letter issued on the issue of war notified the priests and the believers in the diocese that “a criminal hand has ended the life of the much-beloved heir to the country . . . , Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the support of the enlightened . . . elderly emperor and tomorrow’s hope of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and of the peoples in it, whom he loved very warmly.”¹⁵ The same pastoral letter mentioned that the church had inculcated in the Romanian people the loyalty to the throne and to the homeland, and therefore the sons of the church must respond to the call to arms in order to save the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, “inspired by the conviction that its strength will be the strongest shield of their future and of the institutions that ensure their existence as Romanians.”¹⁶ The priests were urged to advise and reassure the people and to protect them against alarming news, some of it fake, which might have caused pointless worries.¹⁷ Special parts were added to the church services to be read during the war.¹⁸

Although the documents sent to the parishes praised the “throne and the homeland,” they had a national component as well, the Romanians being urged to fight for the future of the Romanian institutions. After the sacrifices and the bravery of the Romanian soldiers on the war front, the national discourse of Bishop Miron Cristea became more obvious. Ever since the first days of 1915, in the thanksgiving address to the members of the consistory, the teaching staff of the Theological Institute, and the local priesthood, who congratulated him on the occasion of the new year, Bishop Miron Cristea spoke about the military virtues of the Romanian people throughout history and especially about the Romanian soldiers, who, at that time, were fighting for the crown. The purpose of his address, as the bishop confessed, was to express his conviction that the Romanian people, due to their historical past, deserved national freedom on po-

litical, economic and cultural grounds, these being the aspirations of the Romanians for centuries.¹⁹ In a speech held in the cathedral of Caransebeș on Easter Day of 1915, he spoke about the suffering of the Romanians who were going to war, about the loss of human lives and about the sacrifice of all Romanians who were suffering the effects of the war. According to the bishop, the suffering endured by the Romanians was

*the price at which we redeem the good that is to follow, because precisely the sacrifices are the price of the rights that we are to gain. And only that people who is ready to sacrifice what they hold dearest, even the lives of their sons, for certain ideals, only that one is worthy of reaching those ideals . . . But our sufferings are not only many, they are also long-lasting; they have lasted for centuries. So it would be no surprise if, as a reward, the good God were to allow us the realization of our ideals, commensurate with the long suffering we have endured.*²⁰

In the Christmas pastoral letter of 1915, the bishop had the same attitude, praising the military virtues of the Romanian soldiers while pointing out that the emperor and his advisors could not overlook the heroism of the Romanian soldiers who had to be rewarded, commensurate with their sacrifices, with national freedom.²¹

Despite the encouraging speeches of the bishop, the problems of the war left their mark, first of all, on the communities that had to endure not only the mobilization of the male population, but also the various requisitions. During this period, one of the biggest dissatisfaction of the population was the requisitioning of church bells in the interests of the state. Although the communities protested vehemently, considering that the prejudice to the churches affected not only the confessional being, but also the ethnic being of the Romanians, the diocese could not stop this action; on the contrary, forced by the state authorities, it sent a circular order informing the population of the diocese of the intentions of the government.

The struggle of the priests and of the believers from the diocese of Caransebeș in matters of national issues is best illustrated by the repressive measures taken by the authorities in some parishes. During the war, given the national stakes, the persecutions against the priests as leaders of their communities, and of all those who expressed Romanian feelings, was unprecedented. In order to keep the population away from “subversive elements,” numerous Romanian priests and leaders were arrested or interned in camps.²² Many other priests and school-teachers were sentenced to house arrest.²³

Immediately after the beginning of the war, at the end of July 1914, the priests Antonie Miloșescu from Ogradena Veche, Mihail Costescu from

Eşelnița, Constantin Dure from Orșova, and Coriolan Buracu from Mehădia were arrested and taken to the Court of Caransebeș, for the “crime of making propaganda.”²⁴ In order not to leave the parishes without priests, Bishop Miron Cristea delegated priests as parish administrators. The priest Iacob Drăgulescu from Plavișevița was assigned to fill in as priest in the parish of Ogradena Veche, the priest Paul Magdescu from Jupalnic filled in for Constantin Dure from Orșova, and the priest Dimitrie Popovici filled in for Coriolan Buracu.²⁵ The priests were released following the pardon issued by the emperor on 8 November 1914, a decision made through the agency of the Consistory of Caransebeș.²⁶ Miron Cristea visited the priests incarcerated at Caransebeș and encouraged them to continue with their national actions. Following his visit to the prison, he sent a letter to the central committee of the ASTRA (Romanian cultural association) in Sibiu, asking them to endow the library of the royal court in Caransebeș with Romanian books in order to alleviate the detention of those incarcerated there.²⁷

On 11 September 1916, in a report to Bishop Miron Cristea, Archpriest Andrei Ghidiu of Caransebeș indicated that the priest Romul Jurchescu from Peștere had been arrested by four soldiers and had been taken to the prison in Lugoj. The reason for the arrest was propaganda against the state and possession of some compromising letters that mentioned the unity of the Romanian people and the Romanian language.²⁸ A search was carried out in the priest’s house, and the letters sent from the front by the soldiers of the parish, in which they requested information about their families, were considered as acts of espionage. Passages from the letters were interpreted tendentiously, as acts of rebellion against the Hungarian state and proofs of pro-Romanian allegiance. The books of worship printed in Romania were also confiscated, and the poems by Octavian Goga, found in the school library, were forbidden to be read to children. The priest was also accused of connections with the ASTRA, a society that in 1914 saved the local confessional school from being closed. After the Lugoj investigation, Romul Jurchescu was sent to the military prosecutor’s office in Szeged, where he was accused of espionage and sentenced to prison. He was released on 4 January 1918.²⁹ After Romul Jurchescu was released from prison, Miron Cristea wrote a letter to Archpriest Andrei Ghidiu informing him that the priest Romul Jurchescu from Peștere had been released from prison and had arrived at his parents’ house in Ruginosu. Thus, he was assigned to temporarily teach classes at the school in Peștere, where there were no schoolteachers.³⁰

Not only the priests, but also the confessional schoolteachers were accused of making “national propaganda” by the authorities. On 16 November 1916, Bishop Miron Cristea was notified by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction in Budapest that the teacher Ion Vidu from the confessional school of Lugoj had been detained.³¹ The reasons for his detention were his

membership in the “Oltul” Cultural Circle from Romania, a society that was not under the control of the Hungarian government, and the possession of books that promoted the unity of all Romanians. Following the search conducted at the teacher’s home, correspondence was also found with the director of the Association of Singing and Music of Turnu-Severin and with other people from Romania. All these were considered subversive actions against the Hungarian state.³² At the request of Archpriest George Popovici, the diocesan Consistory of Caransebeș interceded with the Hungarian government requesting that the teacher Ion Vidu be released. Bishop Miron Cristea urged the archpriest to press the state authorities in Lugoj to send a similar letter to the Ministry of the Interior.³³ Ion Vidu was released through the prosecutor’s decision of 2 May 1918, and starting with 10 May he resumed his activity at the school in Lugoj.³⁴

AFTER ROMANIA entered the war alongside the Allied Powers, the persecution against the priests intensified. The requests for release signed by Bishop Miron Cristea invariably had the same answer, which read as follows: “Following the declaration of war by Romania, the request for the release of Romanian Orthodox priests cannot be met.”³⁵ These were the circumstances in which, shortly after Romania’s declaration of war, the Romanian Orthodox diocese of Transylvania and Banat sent a pastoral letter to all the Romanian parishes, in which they categorically condemned Romania’s action.³⁶

The pastoral letter was addressed to the Romanian clergy and people of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Hungary and Transylvania and was issued on 8 September 1916, in Oradea Mare, in a synod held under the chairmanship of the newly elected Metropolitan Bishop Vasile Mangra. Although its text evokes the history of Romanians, it is written from the Hungarian political perspective:

Romania, which was created by our homeland, Hungary, because Radu-Negru from Făgăraș founded the principality of Wallachia, Dragoș from Maramurăș founded the principality Moldavia, and with the support of the Habsburg monarchy, the modern, free and independent Romania emerged and gained strength, willingly connected to our monarchy by a contract of allegiance, with promises of mutual support; Romania—to our great sorrow—broke the promise of allegiance, broke the seal of the contract in a treacherous way and raised their weapons against our homeland, against our great emperor and king, and against those brothers who for two years have been fighting for life and death and with great courage against the enemies of the monarchy. Faced with the new enemy, who so wickedly aspires to diminish and fracture the boundaries of our homeland, you will know how to fight with the same courage, bravery and faith with which our heroes crushed the gran-

*ite fortresses of Iwangorod. For your love, faith, and attachment to the throne and country will enlighten your minds and souls, will strengthen your hearts, and will strengthen your arms.*³⁷

The pastoral letter was signed not only by Metropolitan Vasile Mangra, but also by the bishops Ioan Papp of Arad and Miron Cristea of Caransebeș.³⁸

A similar pastoral letter was issued by Bishop Miron Cristea on 16/29 August 1916, one day after Romania's declaration of war. It was addressed to the church communities in the diocese and urged the people to remain faithful to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.³⁹

This anti-Romanian policy was dictated by Budapest, the church being unable to resist because of the help the state offered to the priests in support of the parishes or schools. In the same period, Miron Cristea, through his secretary, Cornel Corneanu, approached the Romanian government, asking them to defend the interests of the Romanian people in Transylvania and Banat. Bucharest assured him that Romania envisaged a common future for all Romanians.⁴⁰ Dr. Cornel Corneanu communicated to the Romanian Minister of the Interior, Vasile Morțun, that the humiliating declarations of loyalty to the Hungarian state were in the interest of preserving the church's institutions, because, in secret, the bishop was fighting for the Romanian ideal. This information was communicated to Ion I. C. Brătianu, who approved the bishop's attitude and understood the difficult situation of all the Romanians in the monarchy.⁴¹

The language of these official acts was artificial, which could also be seen from the activity of Bishop Miron Cristea, who defended the priests accused of national activities by the state bodies. Romania's participation in the war meant nothing more than the defense of Romanian interests, among which was the national cause of the Romanians in Transylvania and therefore the pressure of the Hungarian government on the Romanian priests and leaders increased.

Bishop Miron Cristea, as well as the other clergymen in the diocese, had to adopt such a discourse, pro-Hungarian on the surface, but the facts showed something else entirely. This attitude characterized his entire activity as bishop of Caransebeș until the events at the end of 1918. A report of the prefect of Caraș-Severin County, Zoltán Medve, sent to the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction in 1911, mentioned that

*although through some actions Bishop Miron Cristea would like to convince the authorities of his friendly feelings towards the Hungarians, in fact he is loyal to the Romanian cause, and even more so, to the extreme Romanian movement, and for the purpose of spreading and strengthening this doctrine in the territory of his diocese, he has been carrying out an incessant activity, wishing to take full advantage of the influence of his position as a prelate in the service of this goal.*⁴²

A vehement position, contrary to Budapest's policy, would have led to the collapse of the entire diocese, the only institution in Banat with strong cultural values and whose goal was to emancipate the people in all respects. That is why the actions of the bishop and of the Consistory of Caransebeș can be considered diplomatic actions with a view to preparing the moment when the national freedom could be declared openly, without endangering the church and its institutions.

Thus, Bishop Miron Cristea took all the necessary measures for the proper running of the diocese and transmitted the orders of the government throughout the territory of the diocese. After the death of Emperor Franz Joseph I, he instructed the priests to hold memorial services,⁴³ and after the ascension to the throne of Emperor Charles IV, by the circular order no. 6269/1916, he asked the priests to commemorate the new emperor and king during Anaphora.⁴⁴

Starting with 1917, the bishop's discourse became more obvious in what concerned the national issue. For the peoples of the monarchy, the entry into war of the United States of America, on 7 April 1917, meant a new step towards national freedom. President Thomas Woodrow Wilson explained that his country's interest in the war in Europe was to free the various nationalities from foreign domination,⁴⁵ and his statements prompted a more energetic resistance movement of the Romanians from Transylvania and Banat.

In this context, a political crisis appeared at the level of the entire Austro-Hungarian monarchy, with the Budapest rulers having to pay heed to some popular grievances. The most important of these was universal suffrage, also included among the immediate demands of the Romanians.⁴⁶

Present in Budapest for the debate on the electoral law in the Chamber of Magnates, the bishop of Caransebeș delivered, on 21 June 1917, a speech on the principles of democracy:

*As a representative of the Romanians from my homeland and as a son of this people, I know the political views of the Romanians who have supported democracy and the universal secret ballot for a long time. They introduced this principle in 1868 into their church administration, although conservatism might rightly be expected from the Church.*⁴⁷

He also spoke about the reduction in the number of constituencies from 40 to 17, although the population had increased, and this reduction contradicted the rights of the Romanians, who were not adequately represented in the country's legislative bodies.⁴⁸ He also drew attention to the fact that the law proposed by the government had many ambiguous passages, with the help of which the interests of the Romanians and their right to a universal free vote could be easily circumvented.⁴⁹ The bishop's speech in the plenary of the Chamber of Magnates

ended with the conclusion that, considering the brave deeds of the Romanians on the front, “the Romanian people deserves to have their rights recognized and their free development guaranteed.”⁵⁰ The law in question was never passed, but the national freedom of the peoples was recognized a year later, when the Austro-Hungarian monarchy collapsed.⁵¹

Although the speech was well articulated and well argued, the newspaper *Drapelul* (The Flag) from Lugoj accused the bishop of having talked about “patriotic Romanians and not the Romanians from the homeland,” making a distinction between the patriotic and non-patriotic population, but the paper considered this omission a *lapsus linguae*.⁵²

In the same year, the bishop demanded the release of all Orthodox priests incarcerated in Hungarian prisons and camps.⁵³ The bishop’s opposition to Hungarian politics continued. In the Christmas pastoral letter of 1917, the bishop of Caransebeș spoke to the people about the democratic trend that was sweeping the world. Starting from a biblical text that promotes peace between peoples, Miron Cristea made the case for peace and its foundation, democracy.⁵⁴ The requirement of the times was for nations to decide their own fate,

*so the rulers of the countries, the diplomats, led by the spirit of modern democracy, must be guided in their steps towards peace by the eternal truths of the law of Christ, which demands that each people be given what they are entitled to and what the law of nature and the divine law entitle them to, that is, to treat each people justly. By doing justice to each people, peace will follow . . . And peace without justice cannot be sustainable. Thus, there will be true peace between countries only on the basis of the justice demanded so energetically by democracy today, but preached by the gentle Nazarene much earlier.*⁵⁵

In the same pastoral letter, he also spoke about the sacrifices made by the Romanians, some of the bravest soldiers of the monarchy, which is why they could no longer be restricted in their liberties and rights, or prevented from gaining a part of the land they had defended with their lives, or even be dispossessed. Through their fight, the Romanians had already gained the right to become free masters of their material and spiritual property.⁵⁶

The obvious tendencies of national emancipation from the pastoral letter caused dissatisfaction among the rulers in Budapest. Passages from the pastoral letter were published in the press from Romania and Bessarabia, and the words of the bishop were spread in all Romanian circles. At the beginning of 1918, shortly after Christmas, the consistory assessor Ștefan Jianu visited the camp for prisoners of war at Timișoara, and there he was welcomed by the Romanian officers, who praised the courage shown by Miron Cristea in his already famous pastoral.⁵⁷

The authorities could not remain indifferent to the bishop's bold actions and started his political persecution. Immediately after the appearance of the pastoral letter, the military command in Caransebeș, the prosecutor's office in Timișoara, the supreme prosecutor in Budapest, the minister of justice and the minister of religious affairs requested the authentic text of the pastoral letter telegraphically.⁵⁸ While in Budapest, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod wrote to Bishop Miron Cristea that great inconveniences were in store for him as a consequence of his boldness. After many reproaches, the minister of religious affairs asked him to accompany him to Vienna, to tell Emperor Charles IV, as king of Hungary, about his actions. Because the emperor was busy with secret talks in order to conclude a separate peace with France, the bishop was notified that he could leave Vienna, and the audience was canceled.⁵⁹

In 1918, the attitude of the bishop against the government continued along the same lines. During a visit he made to the confessional school in Caransebeș, Miron Cristea stated publicly that the Romanian people "were expecting to be granted rights commensurate with the blood shed on the battlefield."⁶⁰

The beginning of 1918 brought a new weekly publication entitled *Lumina* (The Light) to the Romanian press. The first issue appeared in Caransebeș, on 4/17 January 1918, with the subtitle "A religious cultural newspaper for the people." The publication was a complementary press organ of *Foaia diecesană* (The Diocesan Bulletin), the editing and ownership of the newspaper being in the care of the consistory secretary, Dr. Cornel Corneanu.⁶¹ The newspaper *Lumina* was publicized in *Foaia diecesană*, which, in its first issues of 1918, carried the headline: "Read and spread *Lumina*, a religious-cultural newspaper for the people. Written by our best writers, it appears in Caransebeș every Thursday."⁶²

The new newspaper was the result of an understanding between Miron Cristea and his secretary, who both wanted a publication in which political opinions could also be expressed. It was not published under the auspices of the diocese of Caransebeș, in order to avoid a possible involvement of the diocese as an institution in a press lawsuit. The newspaper *Lumina* gradually moved from the religious and cultural program it initially proposed towards political issues, with the intention of preparing the people for the long-awaited political freedom. Although it appeared in only 50 issues during 1918, it captured many political and cultural aspects of that time with finesse as well as tenacity.⁶³

In 1918, on 1 October, at the dawn of the political transformations of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Metropolitan Vasile Mangra died, and the Romanian Church of Transylvania remained without a leader.⁶⁴ Vasile Mangra was considered a slave to the Hungarian government and was condemned by the Romanian circles for his pro-Hungarian stance and for his aversion to the Romanian leaders from Transylvania. Being younger and with a lot of initiative, the

bishop of Caransebeș found himself in the situation of unofficially taking over the destinies of all the Romanians from Transylvania and Banat.⁶⁵ Considering all his activity, Miron Cristea ought to have been the successor of Vasile Mangra, but, according to age and seniority in the archbishopric, the next metropolitan bishop of Transylvania was to be Bishop Ioan Papp of Arad, as decided at the funeral of Metropolitan Vasile Mangra.⁶⁶ Bishop Miron Cristea, however, was to have a different destiny.

After the death of Metropolitan Vasile Mangra, Caius Bredeceanu urged Bishop Miron Cristea to be fearless in the face of Hungarian pressure: “Show that you belong to the young generation from whom the Romanian people expect action. Great actions for which soul and great character are needed . . . it is our cause . . . you will become a Strossmayer [Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Croatian Roman Catholic bishop] of all Romanians.”⁶⁷

THE ATTITUDE of the Orthodox higher clergy, among whom Miron Cristea, later patriarch of Romania, played a leading role and meant a great deal for the national policy of the Romanians from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy during the Great War. The church responded positively to all the emancipation demands of its believers, including in matters of national freedom. Through diplomacy and social acumen, Miron Cristea managed to reconcile the legislative aspects that were hostile to his believers, which we have called “political correctness,” with the Romanian reality of the time. Due to the audacity demonstrated by the bishop of Caransebeș in the speeches made before the political representatives of the time, in the Chamber of Magnates, or in other situations, he became an important representative of the Romanian nation. The evolution of his national discourse was, to a certain extent, interrupted only around the time of Romania’s entry into the war, and this for pertinent and objective reasons. Towards the end of the war, all actions of the bishop of Caransebeș were driven by the continuous struggle for the affirmation of the Romanian aspirations, aspirations that were fulfilled through the historical act of 1 December 1918.



Notes

1. Daniel Alic, *Eparhia Caransebeșului în perioada păstoririi episcopului Miron Cristea (1910–1919): Biserică și societate* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană; Caransebeș: Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, 2013), 81–86.
2. National Archives of Romania, Miron Cristea coll., file 1, fol. 99.

3. Liviu Maior, *Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania 1900–1914* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1986), 97.
4. *Foaia diecesană* (Caransebeș) 25, 20 (1910): 5.
5. *Buletinul veteranilor de război* (Reșița) 1 (1996): 30–32.
6. Dr. Aurel Vlad (1875–1953), representative in the Diet for the Sasca constituency.
7. Romanian Academy Library, Section of manuscripts—rare books, Ioan Bianu coll., mark S 13 (3)/DIV, 56042.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Maior, 111–114.
10. *Drapelul* (Lugoj) 13, 66 (1913): 2.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Ioan Bianu coll., mark S 13 (11)/DIV.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Prot. dr. Marcu Bănescu, “Granița bănățeană și unirea din 1918,” *Mitropolia Banatului* (Timișoara) 28, 10–12 (1978): 600.
15. Archives of the Caransebeș Protopresbytery, file 1914, no. 50/31 July 1914.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. “The priests shall read the Litanies for peace, that is, after the pulpit prayer, the prayer of Patriarch Calistus: *For the king and his army*, from the Euchologion, and at the end, they shall sing this troparion three times: *Lord, take pity on Your people, and bless Your legacy; bestow on our Emperor and King victory over the enemies; and with Your Cross guard Your people.*” Archives of Caransebeș Protopresbytery, file 1914, no. 50/31 July 1914.
19. *Foaia diecesană* 30, 1 (1915): 1–3.
20. Dr. Miron Cristea, *Cuvântări și predici ale unui tânăr teolog mai târziu cleric român în țară sub stăpânire streină 1889–1909*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Tip. Cărilor Bisericești, 1928), 375–376.
21. *Foaia diecesană* 30, 1 (1915): 1–4.
22. Ion Clopoșel, *Revoluția din 1918 și unirea Ardealului cu România* (Cluj: Editura revistei *Societatea de mâine*, 1926), 65–81.
23. Ion Munteanu, Vasile Mircea Zaberca, and Mariana Sârbu, *Banatul și Marea Unire 1918* (Timișoara: Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, 1992), 79–86.
24. Archives of Caransebeș Diocese, Fond bisericesc (Church coll.), file 284/1914, no. 4897/15 July 1914.
25. Daniel Alic, “Aspecte din activitatea misionară și pastorală a parohiilor de pe clisura Dunării în perioada episcopului Miron Cristea (1910–1919),” *Mehedinți, Istorie, Cultură și Spiritualitate* (Drobeta-Turnu-Severin), 1 (2008): 382.
26. Archives of Caransebeș Diocese, Fond bisericesc, file 284/1914, no. 4897/15 July 1914.
27. *Ibid.*, file 301/1914, no. 5147/1 August 1914.
28. *Ibid.*, no. 4958/12 September 1917.
29. *Ibid.*, file 136/1916, no. 1971/24 March 1918.
30. Caraș-Severin County Service of National Archives, Caransebeș Romanian Orthodox Protopresbytery coll., file 2/1918, fol. 1.

31. Ioan Munteanu, ed., *Făurirea statului național unitar român: Contribuții documentare bănățene (1914-1919)* (Bucharest: Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice, Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului, 1983), 22.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 32–33.
34. Ibid., 34–35.
35. Ibid., 606.
36. *Foaia diecesană* 31, 36 (1916): 1.
37. Archives of Caransebeș Protopresbytery, file 1916, no. 41/29 September 1916.
38. Ibid.
39. The text of the pastoral reads as follows: “Now—after 2 years of fierce war and so many sacrifices—we would be entitled to hope for peace, which so many people expect, so that the war may end. Nevertheless, we see instead that this world war not only flares up again, but also draws in other peoples, hitherto neutral. Thus, on the eve of the Holy Great St. Mary, the neighboring Kingdom of Romania also declared war on our Austro-Hungarian monarchy, to our great sadness and sorrow, and news comes to us that in some places the fight with this new enemy has already begun.
- In all our pastoral letters of the past years and in the many circular letters and orders regarding this war, I have drawn your attention to your military and civil duties, and in such difficult days, every citizen must assume them; and the children of the Romanian people from the homeland, and especially those from the territory of the Caransebeș eparchy, have demonstrated, on all fronts, rare bravery and a confidence unmatched by other peoples.
- Especially our home Infantry Regiment no. 43 distinguished themselves everywhere, and through their behavior, courage and endeavors they have honored not only the Romanian people from the diocese of Caransebeș, but also the entire army of the monarchy.
- In brief, the sons of the Romanian people from the homeland proved in the most splendid way their fidelity to the throne and the homeland with their blood, shed in so many glorious battles of this world war, and through their heroism proven on so many occasions and recognized by all the relevant factors.
- Therefore, I do not doubt that the believers from our diocese and all its sons will show the same brave, loyal and trustworthy behavior in the future.
- However, considering the situation caused in our homeland by the new declaration of war, it is my duty to advise and urge you not to abandon your old military and patriotic virtues, but in future to show the same proven loyalty owed to the homeland and the throne, which have protected us so far. Therefore, every believer from the diocese should remain faithful to the king, faithful to His flag and faithful to the Hungarian homeland, identifying himself with all the interests of the land where he was born and which nourished him and his ancestors, and which he must defend in any circumstances.
- I hope that all our spiritual sons will behave in this way until the end so that there is not the shadow of a doubt that even one single man has forgotten himself and shaken hands with the enemies of the country, whoever they might be.

The honored priests should read this in churches to everybody in the most convincing way and should strive along the same lines in the best way they see fit. And the military priests should inform the soldiers too, advising them to fulfill their oath unabatedly . . .” Romanian Patriarchate Archives, Patriarchal coll., Patriarch Miron Cristea, file 9/1916, fol. 90.

40. Constantin Brătescu, *Biserica strămoșească din Banatul de sud și contribuția sa la făurirea României Mari (1867–1919)* (Caransebeș: Dalami, 2007), 22.
41. Ion Rusu Abrudeanu, *Înalt Prea Sfinția Sa Patriarbul României Dr. Miron Cristea înalt regent: Omul și faptele: Contribuțiuni la studiul istoriei Bisericii Române Ortodoxe contemporane*, new edition, forewords by Ioan Chirilă and Mircea Popa (Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2009), 264.
42. *Buletinul veteranilor de război* 1: 30.
43. *Foaia diecesană* 31, 46 (1916): 3–4.
44. Patriarchal coll., Patriarch Miron Cristea, file 9/1916, fol. 24.
45. Rusu Abrudeanu, 268.
46. Pr. Eugen Greuceanu, “Contribuții privind activitatea ierarhilor din Ardeal și Banat pentru drepturile românești în epoca dualistă (1867–1918),” *Mitropolia Banatului* 37, 4 (1987): 70–71.
47. *Drapelul* 17, 64 (1917): 2.
48. Ibid.
49. Rusu Abrudeanu, 269.
50. *Drapelul* 17, 64 (1917): 2.
51. Greuceanu, 71.
52. *Drapelul* 17, 66 (1917): 2.
53. Constantin Brătescu, “Episcopul Dr. Elie Miron Cristea (1868–1939),” *Foaia diecesană*, new ser., 6, 9–10 (67–68) (2000): 10.
54. “It was during this war that the very enlightened men of the nations from one end of the world to the other revealed the truth of the so-called democracy. You have also heard or read about democracy, so it’s good to know what it is. True democracy can be nothing but the purest love for the people from all social strata. The spirit of this democracy, preached by a large number of scholars and apostles full of zeal and energetic will, has produced such a great movement nowadays, a current so alive, that—like a strong wind—it tends to blow away the injustices that have been done and are still being done, especially to the great multitude of the poor and partly deprived of rights, who are prevented from sharing in the benefits of their rights by laws imposed by a certain class of people, who until now have catered only to their own interests. This movement of democracy demands that every social stratum—gentlemen and peasants, rich and poor, capitalists and workers, etc.—have a decisive say in where the future and fate of peoples and countries are decided, so that not only each people, but—as far as possible—every person may receive what is rightfully theirs and so remove or alleviate from the earth, as much as possible, the injustice and hardships of the many.

Democracy demands that—just as the duties of countries rest on everyone’s shoulders—everyone, directly or indirectly, take part in their leadership, opening the way for each person to rise on the social ladder unhindered, no matter how high,

and up to the point where his honor, his mind, his talent, and his capacity for hard work will take him.

And if democracy does not allow a class of people to live off and to the detriment of other classes, so does it not admit that one nation oppresses another, but every nation should have the right to live according to its interests, with its language, religion, garb, customs and traditions, that is, within itself. In short, democracy demands that every nation, every country—big or small—be in control of itself, devoting itself to its wellbeing and advancement, and through itself, to the progress of the country and mankind. This is democracy.” *Foaia diecesană* 32, 52 (1917): 2.

55. *Ibid.*, 3.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Elie Miron Cristea, *Note ascunse: Însemnări personale (1895–1937)*, eds. Maria and Pamfil Bilțiu, notes and commentaries by Gheorghe I. Bodea (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999), 52.

58. Rusu Abrudeanu, 272.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

60. Brătescu, *Biserica strămoșească*, 23.

61. Petru Călin, *Țiparul românesc diecesan din Caransebeș 1885–1918*, vol. 1 (Reșița: Banatica, 1996), 256.

62. *Foaia diecesană* 33, 1 (1918): 4.

63. Daniel Alic, “Contribuții bănățene la Marea Unire: Dr. Cornel Corneanu (1884–1960),” *Studia Caransebesiensis* 1 (2004): 99–100.

64. Archives of Dacia Felix Diocese of Vrșac, Serbia, Vrșac Protokesbytery coll., file 1912, no. 677/23 December 1912.

65. Romanian Patriarchate Archives, Miron Cristea coll., file 1, fol. 148.

66. *Ibid.*, fols. 147–148.

67. Antonie Plămădeală, ed., *Pagini dintr-o arhivă inedită* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1984), 39.

Abstract

Between National Sentiment and Political Correctness: From the Activity of Bishop Miron Cristea during the Years of the First World War

Miron Cristea (1868–1939), patriarch of Romania (1925–1939), was one of the Orthodox bishops of Transylvania and Banat who, through his ecclesiastical and administrative activity, made a decisive contribution to the political events of the First World War. He was bishop of Caransebeș in the period 1910–1919, and his diplomatic abilities were recognized at the time. The legislation regarding the running of church institutions was strict and, for the most part, provided for actions against the Romanian spirit and culture. In the first years of the war, Miron Cristea managed to maintain a balance between the political and the ecclesiastical decisions, but towards the end of the conflagration he was an unyielding advocate of the Romanian national interests.

Keywords

Miron Cristea, First World War, Transylvania, Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Orthodox Church, diplomacy, national politics